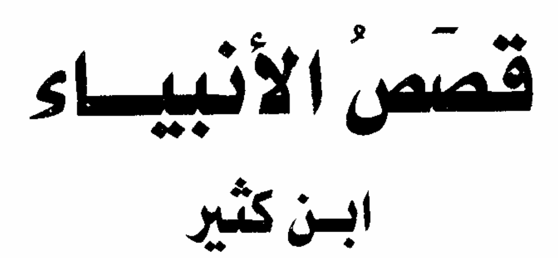
Stories of the Prophets

From Adam to Muhammad



Ibn Katheer

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Al-Manarah for Translation, Publishing & Distribution is pleased to present the second edition of Ibn Katheer's *Stories of the Prophets* (*Qasas Al Anbiyaa'*) shortly after the first edition has been out of print. In answer to the deluge of mail we have received, all requesting a second edition, and in response to the feedback our readers have kindly sent us, a committee was promptly set up to investigate points of controversy or disagreement and to attempt to make use of all beneficial suggestions. This edition prides itself on the story of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, which was added in an attempt to offer our readers a comprehensive coverage of the biographies of venerable Prophets. Finally, we are grateful to our team for their relentless, though certainly much appreciated, effort clearly manifested all through the book.

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah and peace and blessings be upon Muhammad, the seal of Prophets, who brought countless people out of the darkness of ignorance and guided them to Allah's path. Though we Muslims normally devote huge attention to the story of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and recount to our youngsters at least a simplified version of it, it is generally the case that the biographies of many other Prophets remain shrouded in obscurity. Hence, the value of *Stories of the Prophets* lies primarily in the fact that it places under the spotlight many Prophets whom Allah, exalted be He, sent to humanity, highlights their laudable efforts in calling on people to worship Allah, associate no partners with him and abide by his laws and also sheds light on their unyielding perseverance when faced with rejection. Similarly, the book seeks to help readers draw lessons from the memorable lives of Prophets that abound in breathtaking miracles and unquestionably solid evidence of Allah's power and might, not to mention His existence.

It is noteworthy that the book is recommended for both children and adults for numerous reasons. The stories of all the Prophets abound in priceless values that parents, though often negligent of, are advised to instill in their children. Additionally, many of the stories recounted in the book offer marvelous reading material that children of various age groups would surely find fascinating. Driven by their vivid imagination, young readers would be enchanted by the stories of exceptionally bold men who displayed admirable courage and relentless determination in delivering Allah's mission, heedless of all obstacles that were thrown in their way. Likewise, the countless miracles that they worked would certainly be breathtaking. Young and impressionable as they are, the book lauds the lives of humble people who stand as the ideal role models for children. Though invaluable for children, the book would be equally gripping for

adults. In spite of the fact that the stories of some of the Prophets are quite famous to the layman reader, *Stories of the Prophets*, in its comprehensive coverage of their biographies, touches on some details and events which are often treated as less important, but which, nonetheless, serve to emphasize the loftiness of the Prophets' status. Moreover, the book repeatedly attempts to disperse falsities and baseless allegations relating to some of the events, actions or words generally ascribed to them. In other words, the book deliberately chooses not to ignore those unfounded allegations, but rather explicitly mentions them in order to refute them and uncover the truth based on reliable Islamic references. Moreover, by the end of the book, a reader cannot help but be awe-stricken by all of Allah's venerable Prophets, and particularly by His sealing Prophet, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. A reader can only sense the distinguished and sublime position the last of Allah's Prophets came to assume as well as the unmistakable superiority he enjoys over the rest of Allah's Prophets and messengers.

I wish to thank all those who made this work possible and whose praiseworthy efforts cannot be adequately rewarded, save by Allah's handsome reward in this life and the Hereafter. Though editing this book was by no means an easy job, I have to admit that it managed to take me to an entirely different world that is so divorced from ours, which, in turn, has led me to start looking at things from a different perspective. I sincerely hope that readers would benefit from the book and also have a pleasant time as they take a journey into the remote past and encounter remarkable people, the likes of whom no longer exist in our lives.

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TRANSALTOR'S NOTES

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. We cannot find words to praise Him, as He only sees fit how laudation should be addressed to Him. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils within ourselves and the evils of our bad deeds. Whosoever Allah guides will never be led astray, and whosoever He leads astray will never find guidance. We bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One without any associate, and We bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger and bondman, peace and blessings be upon him, his kith and kin, his Companions and all those who follow their guidance until the Day of Judgement.

As people, throughout the ages, stand in need of Divine guidance and a law to regulate their lives and conduct, Almighty Allah chose from amongst every nation noble persons whose righteousness, integrity, trustworthiness and upright character were unquestionable, and entrusted them with the duty of communicating the Divine Revelation (*Wahy*) to their people and showing them the straight path. These are the Prophets and messengers of Allah.

These Prophets and messengers called their people to worship Allah alone and to ascribe no partners with Him. Some of their peoples accepted the call while others showed intransigence and maltreated their Prophets. Some Prophets were expelled from their lands; some were assassinated; some, in the face of their people's indifference, continued preaching the whole of their lives, and only won a few converts. Yet, in the midst of the harassing opposition and derision to which they were perpetually subjected, these Prophets remained steadfast and forbearing and did not cease to invite their people to relinquish disbelief and rebellion and to yield to the call of truth. Because of this, they underwent different kinds of torture and went through a great deal of tribulations.

The Glorious Qur'an has narrated many stories of the Prophets of ancient nations. It has related their efforts in proclaiming Allah's message and recorded their sufferings and forbearance in Allah's Cause. Allah, Exalted be He, narrated some of these stories to Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, with a view to setting his heart at ease and helping him remain firm on the path of *Da`wah* (call to Allah), the path along which all Prophets of Allah trod. The Qur'an has also shed light on the various methods the Prophets of Allah adopted to invite their people, as well as the excellent examples they showed in all domains of life.

Therefore, the stories of Allah's Prophets, peace be upon them, have not been narrated for the sake of entertainment or cultural pleasure; they carry a significant message to people in general and to those who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of *Da`wah* in particular. This is clear in the following verse: ***"There is, in their guidance, instruction for men who endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation for what went before it, a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe."*** (Yusuf: 111) Also, in the conclusion of *Surah* (Qur'anic chapter), "Hood", Almighty Allah tells Prophet Muhammad that He has not related these stories for entertaining him, but to help him defend the truth and hold fast to the straight path. Allah says, ***"All that We relate to thee of the stories of the messengers. - with it We make firm thy heart: in them there cometh to thee the truth, as well as an exhortation and a message of the remembrance to those who believe."*** (Hood: 120)

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in turn urged his Companions to learn about the stories of ancient nations, in compliance with Allah's command in the Qur'an: ***"So relate the story; perchance they may reflect."*** (Al-A`raaf: 176) Thus, Muslims have been keen to preserve the methodology of learning the stories of the earliest Prophets and recounting them to

their children. They, moreover, have kept such records in written forms so that they may not die out or sink into oblivion. So these records have been transmitted throughout the ages from one generation to another.

Among these records that deal with the stories of the Prophets is Ibn Katheer's *Qasas Al-Anbiyaa'* (Stories of the Prophets), which is considered by most scholars a unique work of its kind, and it has been relied on as a good work of reference. It was due to this reason that the idea of rendering this book into English occurred to our minds. It took us about six months to study and translate the book. As the original book of Ibn Katheer is full of details, the translation underwent some abridgment, without impairing the contents of the book. Also, we have included the story of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, drawn from other sources, as the book of Ibn Katheer does not tackle the story in a separate chapter.

Through reading *Stories of the Prophets,* the reader will come to the conclusion that all Prophets of Allah preached the same message, that is, to worship Allah alone and not to ascribe any rivals to Him; that all the heavenly revealed Scriptures emanate from the one and the same source, namely, Allah Almighty, and as such they convey a basic message which is a unified one. This chain of Allah's Prophets was sealed by Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who conveyed the final eternal message, Islam, to the whole mankind.

It is hoped that the revised edition of *Stories of the Prophets* will also more effectively present the common factors among the Prophets of Allah, and help demonstrate the excellent example they showed in all walks of life.

In conclusion, we would like to thank all those who helped to publish this book. We pray to Allah to accept all our efforts as sincere deeds done solely for His sake, for it is He alone Whose reward is of any real significance.

Notes about the Translation:

Abbreviations Used

AC After Christ
AH After Hijrah

Transliteration of Arabic Words and Names

The following table shows the system followed in transliterating the letters of the Arabic alphabet:

أ	A	T	ط
	Aa (long vowel)	Z	ظ
ب	B	` (inverted postrophe)	ع
ت	T	Gh	غ
ث	Th	F	ف
ج	J	Q	ق
ح	H	K	ك
خ	Kh	L	ل
د	D	M	م
ذ	Dh	N	ن
ر	R	H	ه
ز	Z	w (consonant)	و
س	S	oo (long vowel)	
ش	Sh	y (consonant)	ى
ص	S	ee (long vowel)	
ض	D	' (apostrophe)	ء

BIOGRAPHY OF IBN KATHEER

(700 - 774 AH)

(May Allah bless his soul)

`Emaad Ed-Deen Isma`eel Ibn `Umar Ibn Katheer Al-Basri and later Ad-Dimashqi was born in 700 AH, or a little later. After the decease of his father, Ibn Katheer, aged seven then, headed for Damascus, accompanied by his elder brother. He owed much of his learning to Ibn Ashginah, Al-Amadi, Ibn `Asaakir and others, may Allah be pleased with them all. He immensely revered Ibn Taimiyah, may Allah bless his soul, whose views he believed, defended and mostly abided by, particularly as regards divorce. It was on account of this that he went through an ordeal and was made to suffer a lot.

Ibn Katheer was widely acclaimed for the sublime degree of learning that he so admirably attained. Scholars have unanimously attested to his well-versedness, particularly in the fields of the exegesis of the Glorious Qur'an, Hadith and history. Ibn Habeeb describes him as "the leader of all men engaged in the exegesis (of the Qur'an). He amassed and categorized all (the knowledge) he heard. People marveled at his *fatwas* and benefited from his teachings. His *fatwas* grew widely popular all across the country. He was renowned for his precision and was proclaimed as the beacon of history, Hadith and exegesis (of the Qur'an)." Ibn Hijji, one of his students, owed: "Of all our contemporaries, he (Ibn Katheer) was the best at memorizing authentic Hadiths and the most knowledgeable as to assessing the degree of reliability and honesty of Hadith-narrators as well as authentic and non-authentic Hadiths. His comrades and mentors ack nowledge every word of the above. I would frequently visit him, and every time I was in his company I benefited from him."

Ibn Katheer lost his eyesight shortly before he died in 774 AH. He was buried at the Sufis cemetery along with his mentor Ibn Taimiyah. Among his best-known works are his masterpiece in history *Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah* (The Beginning and the End). He also interpreted part of Al Bukhari's *Saheeh* (book of authentic *Hadiths*). By and large, Ibn Katheer's admirable Knowledge and well-versedness are best manifested to whoever reads his two best celebrated masterpieces; his interpretation and his book of history.

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THE STORY OF ADAM (AADAM), PEACE BE UPON HIM

The Creation of Adam:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?' He said, 'I know what ye know not.' "*** (Al Baqarah: 30) Ibn Katheer states: This is a report from Allah to His angels explaining to them the wisdom behind creating Adam and his offspring, and how they will succeed each other on earth. Allah says in another verse: ***"It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."*** (Al An`aam: 165). He also says: ***"Or, who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and who relieves its suffering, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Little it is that ye heed!"*** (Al Naml: 62). Allah tells that to His angels as a hint to the creation of Adam and his children, as He sets the scene for the occurrence of a great event before it actually takes place.

Allah says: ***"They said: 'Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?' He said: 'I know what ye know not.' "*** (Al Baqarah: 30) This question on the part of the angels was an attempt to inquire about the wisdom behind something. It was not a kind of protesting against or belittling of humankind nor envying them, as

perceived by some people in the dark. Qatadah maintains: They expected what those newly-created beings might do through their past experience of the Jinns that lived on earth before the creation of Adam. Ibn `Umar says: The Jinns lived on earth for two thousand years before the creation of Adam and committed bloodshed. Allah sent angels to expel them from the earth and forced them to the islands. Ibn Katheer states: The angels continued: ***"Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)"*** meaning that we forever worship You and never disobey You. If the aim of creating humankind is to worship You, O Lord, we worship you tirelessly day and night.

Allah answered them saying: ***"I know what ye know not"*** meaning I know well the objective of creating humankind that you are not aware of. Many of them will be Prophets, messengers, martyrs, and pious and righteous people. Allah, then, informed them that He honored Adam with knowledge, saying, ***"And He taught Adam the names of all things."*** Ibn `Abbaas points: The names mentioned are the names with which people define things such as: man, beast, earth, plain, sea, mountain, camel, ass, etc. Then He placed them before the angels, and said, "***Tell Me the names of these if ye are right.***" (Al Baqarah: 31). Al-Hasan Al-Basri maintains: When Allah wanted to create Adam, the angels said, Whenever Allah creates a creature, we find out that we are more knowledgeable than it. Thus it was a trial for them. This is indicated in Allah's saying: ***"if ye are right."***

Allah says: ***"They said: 'Glory to Thee: of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom.' "*** (Al Baqarah: 32) Ibn Katheer states: Glorified be our Lord! None can know anything hidden in Your Knowledge without being taught by You. This relates to another Qur'anic verse: ***"Nor shall they***

compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth." (Al Baqarah: 255) Allah says: ***"He said: 'O Adam! Tell them their names.' When he had told them, Allah said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heavens and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?' "*** (Al Baqarah: 33) Sa`eed Ibn Jubair explains: Allah's saying, ***"what ye reveal"*** refers to the saying of the angels, ***"Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein"*** and His saying, ***"what ye conceal"*** refers to Iblis when he concealed arrogance and his thought that he was a better creature than Adam. Qatadah maintains: The verse, ***"what ye conceal"*** refers to the angels' saying, ***"Whenever Allah creates a creature, we find out that we are more knowledgeable and honorable in the sight of Allah than it."*** The disobedience of Iblis caused him to be cursed. Allah says: ***"And behold, We said to the angels: 'Bow down to Adam:' and they bowed down: not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject Faith."*** (Al Baqarah: 34)

Ibn Katheer points out: It is a great grace from Allah endowed upon Adam, as He created him with His hands, breathed soul unto him, taught him the names of all things and commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before him. Allah says: ***"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him."*** (Al Hijr: 29) Allah also says that it is He Who created Adam and gave him shape then bade the angels bow down to him, and they did; except Iblis that refused to be among those who bowed down. Allah says: ***" 'What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?' He said: 'I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 11-12) This means that Iblis imagined that he was of a more sublime status than Adam, which in turn made him abstain from prostrating himself to Adam, despite the

divine command to do so.

Allah says: ***"Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man, from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape; When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.' So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together: Not so Iblis: he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves. (Allah) said: 'O Iblis! What is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves?' (Iblis) said: 'I am not one to prostrate myself to man, whom Thou didst create from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape.' (Allah) said: 'Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed.' And the Curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment."*** (Al Hijr: 28-35) Thus Iblis incurred Allah's wrath on account of his disobedience of the divine command to prostrate himself before Adam.

Allah moreover says: ***"Behold! We said to the angels: 'Bow down unto Adam:' they bowed down except Iblis: he said: 'Shall I bow down to one whom Thou didst create from clay?' He said: 'Seest Thou? This is the one whom Thou hast honored above me! If Thou wilt but respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway, all but a few!' (Allah) said: 'Go thy way; if any of them follow thee, verily Hell will be the recompense of you (all) - an ample recompense.' Lead to destruction those whom thou canst among them, with thy (seductive) voice, make assaults on them with thy cavalry and thy infantry; mutually share with them wealth and children; and make promises to them.' But Satan promises them nothing but deceit. As for My servants, no authority shalt thou have over them: Enough is thy Lord for a Disposer of affairs."*** (Al Israa': 61-5)

Allah also says: "*' **Behold!' We said to the angels, 'Bow down to Adam:' they bowed down except Iblis. He was one of the Jinns, and he broke the Command of his Lord. Will ye then take him and his progeny as protectors rather than Me? And they are enemies to you! Evil would be the exchange for the wrong-doers!**"* (Al Kahf: 50) Ibn `Abbaas states: Iblis was the archangel in the lower heaven and he belonged to a division of the angels that were called "Jinns". Yet Al-Hasan Al-Basri argues: Iblis can never belong to the angels. In *Saheeh Moslem*, it is reported that 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said that the Prophet said: *"The Angels are created from light while the Jinn are created from fire free of smoke. Adam was created as is described for you (in the Glorious Qur'an)."*

Allah furthermore says: *" **'Behold,' the Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man from clay: When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.' So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together: Not so Iblis: he was haughty, and became one of those who reject Faith. (Allah) said: 'O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with My hands? Art thou haughty? or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?' (Iblis) said: 'I am better than he: Thou createdst me from fire, and him thou createdst from clay.' (Allah) said: 'Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed. And My Curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment.' (Iblis) said: 'O my Lord! Give me then respite till the Day the (dead) are raised.' (Allah) said: 'Respite then is granted thee; till the Day of the Time Appointed.' (Iblis) said: 'Then by Thy Power, I will put them all in the wrong, except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy grace).' (Allah) said: 'Then it is just and fitting, and I say what is just and fitting; that I will certainly fill Hell with thee and those who follow***

thee, every one.' *"* (Saad: 71-85).

Allah says: ***"He said: 'Because Thou hast thrown me out of the Way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on Thy Straight Way: then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: nor wilt Thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for Thy mercies)."*** (Al `Araaf: 16-17) Iblis meant that he has taken it on himself to stand in the way of the children of Adam in every path they tread and in any direction they head. Thus, those of Adam's offspring who manage to resist the temptation of Iblis will have really attained salvation, whereas the miserable among the children of Adam are those follow the way of Iblis.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal reports that Abu Hurairah said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"When the son of Adam recites a verse of prostration and then prostrates himself (before Allah), Satan isolates himself, cries and invokes curses on himself and says, 'The son of Adam was commanded to bow down and he obeyed (his Lord), thus he will be destined to Paradise but I was commanded (by Allah) to prostrate myself (before Adam) yet I disobeyed and thus I will be destined to Hell.' "*

The Creation of Eve:

Allah says, ***"We said: 'O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.'*** *"* (Al Baqarah: 35) Allah also says, ***"(Allah) said: 'Get out from this, disgraced and expelled. If any of them follow thee, Hell will I fill with you all. O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree,***

or ye run into harm and transgression.' " (Al A`raaf: 18-19)

Allah also says, ***"When We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves to Adam,' they prostrated themselves, but not Iblis: he refused. Then We said: 'O Adam! Verily, this is an enemy to thee and thy wife: so let him not get you both out of the Garden, so that thou art landed in misery. There is therein (enough provision) for thee not to go hungry nor to go naked, nor to suffer from thirst, nor from the sun's heat.' "*** (Taa Ḥaa: 116-9)

`Ibn Katheer explains: The context of these verses proves that the creation of Eve was before Adam's living in Paradise. This is supported by the Qur'anic verse: ***"O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden."*** However As-Suddyy reports that Ibn `Abbaas, Ibn Mas`ood and some of the Companions said, Iblis was expelled from Paradise and then Adam was admitted to it. He walked alone in it without a mate to find solace in. He once slept and when he woke up he found a woman sitting beside his head whom Allah had created from his rib. He asked her, 'What is you?' She said, 'A woman.' He asked, 'Why have you been created?'. She replied, 'So you may find solace in me.' The angels then asked him, to test his knowledge, 'What is her name Adam?' He replied, 'Eve (Hawwaa').' They asked, 'Why is she called so?' He replied, 'Because she has been created from a living matter.' In *Saheeh Al-Bukhari,* it is reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Be good to women as a woman is created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is the upper part of it. If you try to straighten its crookedness, you will break it. Yet if you leave it as is, it will remain crooked. Therefore, I urge you to be good to women."*

Iblis Incites Adam:

Allah says: ***"O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression."*** (Al A`raaf: 19) Ibn Katheer states: When Allah admitted both Adam and Eve to Paradise, He allowed them to eat from all its fruits except the fruit of a certain tree, whose kind was a subject of difference among the exegetes of the Qur'an. Some believe it was a vine tree, others maintain that it was a palm-tree, and others suggest yet different kinds. Allah did not specify its kind in the Glorious Qur'an because it will be of no avail us to know. Iblis, the cursed, envied Adam and Eve and managed to use stratagem and tricks to strip them of the grace and good attire. Allah says: ***"Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them, in order to reveal to them their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said: 'Your Lord only forbade you this tree, lest ye should become angels or such beings as live forever.' And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser."*** (Al A`raaf: 20-1) Satan tried to deceive them by telling them that he only wished to offer them advice. In another verse, Allah says: ***"But Satan whispered evil to him: he said, 'O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?' "*** (Taa Haa: 120) The Tree of Eternity mentioned above may be the one that is mentioned by Ahamd Ibn Hanbal who reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said, *"In Paradise there is a tree that one can ride alongside its shade for a hundred years without reaching its end. It is the Tree of Eternity."*

Adam and Eve Sin and Repent:

Allah said, ***"So by deceit he brought about their fall: when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to***

them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies." (Al A`raaf: 22) Allah also says: ***"In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden"*** (Taa Haa: 121)

Ibn Katheer states: When Adam and Eve dwelt in Paradise, they ate bountifully from whatever food they wished. When they ate from the forbidden tree, they were deprived from the attire they were first endowed with and were sent to earth. Muslim scholars differ over the definite location on which they first landed and the duration of time they spent in Paradise. They also differ as to whether Adam and Eve bore children in Paradise or not? Yet, Allah knows best.

It is said that Eve was the first to eat from the forbidden tree and that she convinced Adam to eat from it. Allah knows best. It was reported in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari* on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said: *"If it was not for the children of Israel (who were ordered not to store meat but they did), meat would never decay, and if it was not for Eve, a wife would never betray her husband."* As for Allah's saying, ***"they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden,"*** Ath-Thauri reports that Ibn `Abbaas points: The leaves mentioned above are the leave of the fig tree. Ibn Katheer observes that this saying seems to be reported after the People of the Book. Yet, he believes that the meaning of the verse runs deeper than that. However, Allah knows best.

Allah's says: ***"Then did Satan make them slip from the (Garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been."*** (Al Baqarah: 36) This means that they were deprived of the abode of rest and felicity and had to descend to earth which is the abode of toiling and sorrow. This was the

result of what Satan whispered to them and incited them to do. Al-Hafizh Ibn `Asaakir reports on the authority of Ubayy Ibn Ka`b that the Messenger of Allah said: *"Your father Adam was as tall as the lofty palm-tree of 60 cubit height, his body was hairy, and his private parts were fully covered with hair. When he sinned in Paradise, his private parts became visible and he left Paradise. He then found a tree on his way which held him by the forehead and he was called upon by Allah, 'Have you left Paradise to flee from Me, Adam?' 'No,' replied Adam, 'but because of my shame from You, my Lord, due to what I have committed.' "*

Allah says: ***"And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you?" They said: "Our Lord! we have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost."*** (Al A`raaf: 22-3) This was a confession of sin and an explicit repentance to Allah in humility and submissiveness. This has become a tradition which leads the children of Adam to their good in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah says: ***"(Allah) said: 'Get ye down, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood for a time.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 24) The discourse here is directed to Adam, Eve and Iblis, who were commanded to descend from Paradise as opponents who should forever be in combat against each other.

Allah says: ***"Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."*** (Al Baqarah: 37) Sa`eed Ibn Jubair and others claim that these words are Adam's when he repented to Allah. ***"They said: 'Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 23)

Ibn Katheer comments: This verse is similar to another in which Allah says: ***"thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and allow himself to be seduced. But his Lord chose him (for His Grace): He turned to him, and gave him guidance."*** (Taa Haa: 121-2)

Al Hakim reports in his *Mustadrak* that Ibn `Abbaas mentions, Adam said, 'O Lord! Have not You created me with Thy Hands? He was answered, 'Yes.' He continued, 'Have not You breathed life unto me from Your Spirit?'. He was answered, 'Yes." (Adam said,) 'And when I sneezed, You said, '*Yarhamukum Allah* (may Allah have mercy on you) and that Your mercy precedes Your wrath?' He was answered, 'Yes." (Adam continued,) 'And You have destined me to do this?' He was answered, 'Yes." (Adam continued,) 'Shall I be returned to Paradise if I repent?' He was answered, 'Yes.'

Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Moses [Musa] argued with Adam. The former said to the latter, 'It was on account of your sin that people were deprived of dwelling in Paradise and were destined to misery.' Adam replied, 'Even you Moses, whom Allah has selected to carry His message and discourse! You blame me for a matter decreed by Allah before my creation?' The Prophet said, 'Thus Adam refuted Moses' argument.' "*

Some scholars maintain: The reply of Adam was an argument that one may take divine decree as a cause of misfortune, but not for disobedience. Ibn Katheer points: If Adam's answer concerning the blame of Moses was interpreted to be a justification of committing sin due to what Allah has decreed on man, this would have extended to all sinners. Accordingly, there would have been no retaliation nor

prescribed penalties to be executed. This will inevitably lead to horrible consequences.

Which Paradise?

Exegetes of the Qur'an differ concerning the Paradise to which Adam was admitted, was it in heaven or on earth? According to the view of the majority of scholars, it is the Garden of Abode. This is based on the superficial meaning of the related Qur'anic verses and *Hadiths*, such as Allah's saying, ***"We said: 'O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden.' "*** (Al Baqarah: 35) and the saying of Moses to Adam, "It was on the account of your sin that people were deprived from dwelling in Paradise."

In *Saheeh Moslem,* it is reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Allah will assemble people and the believers will stand when Paradise will be brought near to them. They will come to Adam and say, "O father let Paradise be open to us.' He will say, 'Did anything deprive you of Paradise except the sin of your father?"* This is a strong proof in favor of the opinion that maintains that what is intended is the Garden of Abode.

Others claim: The paradise wherein Adam dwelt is not the Paradise of Eternity, because Adam was forbidden to eat from a certain tree, and because he slept in it and departed from it and because Iblis entered it, which contradicts the conjecture that it is the Garden of Abode. Yet, Allah knows best.

THE HADITHS THAT DEAL WITH THE CREATION OF ADAM

Muslim mentions in his Saheeh, on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said, *"The best day on which the sun rose is Friday. In it Adam was created, admitted to Paradise, and departed from it."* In another version in the Saheeh there is the addition, *"Resurrection will be Friday."*

Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet said, *"Allah created Adam and made him 60 cubit high. He then said to him, 'Go and bid greeting to such group of angels and listen to their reply. This will be your greeting and the greeting of your progeny after you.' He (Adam) said, 'As-salamu 'alaikum [Peace be upon you.]' They (the angels) replied, 'Wa 'alaika Al Salamu wa rahmatul-lah [Allah's peace and mercy be upon you.]' Thus they added the phrase, 'wa rahmatul-lah.' People who enter Paradise will have the same figure of Adam. Yet the sizes of people are diminishing by the day."*

On the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari, Imam Ahmad reports that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Allah created Adam from a handful (of clay) which He gathered from all the earth. The children of Adam are in accordance with this; some of them are white, some are red, some are black and some are in between. Some of them are easygoing, others are tough and some are in between. Some of them are evil, others are good and some are in between."*

As-Suddyy mentions on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas, Ibn Mas`ood and some of the Companions that they said, "Allah sent Gabriel to the earth to bring Him clay. The earth said, 'I seek Allah's protection from you if you will take

anything from me or turn me ugly.' Thus he (Gabriel) returned and did not take anything from the earth. He said, 'My Lord! It (the earth) sought Your protection and I accepted that. Then He (Allah) sent Michael [Mika'eel]. The earth sought Allah's protection from him and he accepted that. He (Michael) then repeated Gabriel's words. He (Allah) then sent the Angel of Death. The earth sought Allah's protection from him, but he said, 'And I seek Allah's protection from returning without fulfilling His commandment.' He (Michael) then took some clay from the surface of the ground and mixed it. He did not take it from a single place, but took from the white, the red and the black mud of the earth. Therefore, the children of Adam were created in different colors. He then ascended to Heaven and moistened the clay until it became sticky. Allah then molded it with His hands so that Iblis may not feel himself superior to it. He (Allah) then fashioned it in the shape of a human being from clay. It remained in clay for forty years following that Friday (in which he was created.) When the angels passed by it (the body of Adam), they were scared and the one who was scared most was Iblis. When Iblis passed by it (the body of Adam), he used to strike it, and it would make a banging sound similar to that produced by clay (when struck). Thus Allah said, ***"He created man from sounding clay like unto pottery"*** (Al Rahmaan: 14) Iblis would say (to the body of Adam), 'Surely you have been created for a certain aim.' He entered from its mouth and got out from its posterior and said to the angels, "Do not be afraid of this, for your Lord is the Eternal, Absolute while this thing is hollow. If I am to be given authority over it, I will surely destroy it."

When Allah breathed of His soul into Adam, Allah ordered the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam after He (Allah) breathed His soul into it. When Allah breathed life unto Adam and it reached his head, he sneezed. The angels said to

him, 'Say *Al-Hamdu-lillah* (praise be to Allah!)' Thus he said so. Allah then said to him, 'May your Lord show mercy on you.' When life reached his eyes, he saw the fruits of Paradise. When life reached his stomach, he felt hunger. Thus, he jumped hastily, before life reached his legs, to grab the fruits of Paradise. Thus Allah said, ***'Man is a creature of haste.'*** " (Al Anbiyaa': 37) As-Suddyy then narrates the story of Adam in full. Ibn Katheer states: Some of the above stories find evidence in the Prophetic *Hadiths*, though most of them rely on Israelite narratives. Examples of such evidence is what Imam Ahmad narrates on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"When Allah created Adam, He left him for a period (of Time) as long as He willed. Iblis went many times around him. When he saw that Adam's body was hallow, he knew that he was vulnerable."*

In his *Muwatta'*, an authentic book of Prophetic history, Imam Malik Ibn Anas mentions on the authority of Muslim Ibn Yasaar Al-Juhani that `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab was asked about the following verse: ***"When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam from their loins, their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): 'Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?' They said: 'Yea! We do testify!'*** (Al A`raaf: 172) `Umar answered: I heard Allah's Messenger say, when asked about this verse, *"Allah created Adam, then wiped his back and extracted from it some of his progeny. He (Allah) then said, 'I have created these for Paradise, thus they will do the deeds of the dwellers of Paradise.' He then wiped his (Adam's) back and extracted from it some of his progeny and said, 'I created these for Hell, thus they will do the deeds of dwellers of the Hell.' A man said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What is the fruit of deeds then? (If one is predestined to either Paradise or Hell).' Allah's Messenger replied, If a man is created for Paradise, Allah lets him do the*

deeds of the people of Paradise until he dies while sticking to the deeds of the people of Paradise and thus enters it. When, on the other hand, Allah creates a man for Hell, He lets him do the deeds of the people of Hell until he dies while sticking to the deeds of the people of Hell and thus enters it."

In an other interpretation of this Qur'anic verse; Abu Ja`far Ar-Raazi narrates on the authority of Ubayy Ibn Ka`b that, Allah assembled all the creatures that would come to being until the Day of Resurrection. He created them from their loins, then made them speak and pledge and let them be witnesses to themselves, "Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?" They replied, "Yes." He (Allah) said, "I will make the seven heavens and earths as well as your father Adam bear witness to you in order not to claim on the Day of Resurrection that you have no knowledge of this. You should know that there no deity other than Me, no Lord but Me, so do not associate any other idols with Me. I will send you messengers to warn you of My punnishment, and will reveal to you My book." They said, "We bear witness to the fact that You are our Lord and God, there is no Lord for us other than You and no god for us other than You." They hereby pledged allegiance to Him. Allah then raised their father, Adam, until he saw the rich and the poor, the one who is of good countenance and the one who is not. He (Adam) said, "O Lord! Would you make all your servants equal!" He (Allah) said, "I wished to be thanked." He (Adam) found that, among his descendants, Prophets appeared like lamps, beaming with light. Allah took from them another kind of covenant of Prophethood. This is in accordance with Allah's verse: ***"And remember We took from the Prophets their Covenant: as (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn Covenant"*** (Al Ahzaab: 7) Allah also says: ***"So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish)***

Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah." (Al Room: 30) Allah moreover says: ***"This is a Warner, of the (series of) Warners of old!"*** (Al Najm: 56) Allah further say: ***"Most of them We found not men (true) to their covenant: but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient."*** (Al A`raaf: 102) This was narrated by Imams: Ibn Abi Haatim, Ibn Jareer, and Ibn Mardawaih in their commentaries. This was also narrated on the authority of Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Sa`eed Ibn Jubair, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Qatadah, As-Suddyy, as well as some scholars of the *Salaf* (early Muslims) in contexts that accord with these *Hadiths*.

THE STORY OF ABEL AND KANE; (KABIL AND HABIL)

Allah says, *"Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! They each presented a sacrifice (to Allah): it was accepted from one, but not from the other. Said the latter: 'Be sure I will slay thee.' 'Surely,' said the former, 'Allah doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous. 'If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee: for I do fear Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds. For me, I intend to let thee draw on thyself my sin as well as thine, for thou wilt be among the Companions of the Fire, and that is the reward of those who do wrong.' The (selfish) soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother: he murdered him, and became (himself) one of the lost ones. Then Allah sent a raven, who scratched the ground, to show him how to hide the shame of his brother. 'Woe is me!' said he; 'Was I not even able to be as this raven, and to hide the shame of my brother?' Then he became full of regrets."* (Al Maa'idah: 27-31)

Many narrators mention that Adam and Eve bore children in pairs, a male and a female, as also mentioned by Ibn Katheer. Adam and Eve were commanded to marry each male of one pair to the female of the other pair, and vise versa. But a male and a female belonging to the same pair were not allowed to marry one another.

According to As-Suddyy, Ibn `Abbaas, Ibn Mas`ood and others: When Kane wanted to marry his sister who was born with Abel, which was his pure right, the latter, who was elder, refused and wanted to marry her himself. Adam ordered Abel to marry his sister to his brother, Kane, but Abel refused to. He, then ordered both Abel and Kane to offer a sacrifice to

Allah, which they did. Kane, who owned a flock of animals, offered a fleshy cow. Abel offered for sacrifice some of his withered crops. A fire descended from heaven and devoured the sacrifice of Kane but did not touch the offering of Abel.

Abu Ja`far Al-Baqir comments that Abel told Adam, Allah accepted the offering of Kane because you supplicated Allah for him but did not do for me. He also threatened his brother when they were in private. One night, Kane was late in returning with the flock that he tended. Adam sent Able to fetch him. When Abel met Kane, he said to him, Your offering was accepted by Allah, while mine was not. Allah accepts good deeds only from the righteous, answered Kane. Abel, overwhelmed with anger, told his brother, I'm going to slay you to prevent you from marrying my sister. Kane replied, " ***'If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee: for I do fear Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds.'*** " (Al Maa'idah: 28) This indicates the good manners of Kane and his fear of Allah. Abel then struck him dead with an iron rod. It was also reported that he strangled him. `Abdullaah Ibn `Umar said, "By Allah, the slain (Kane) was stronger than the other, but he felt ashamed to reach out and harm his brother."

Ibn Katheer maintains: This report finds support in the two authentic books of *Hadith*, where it was stated that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"When two Muslims face one another with their swords (pointed at each other), the killer and the killed will be destined to Hell." The Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, this might be fair concerning the killer, but what about the killed?" He (the Messenger) replied, "He was keen to kill the other."*

Concerning Allah's saying, ***"For me, I intend to let thee draw on thyself my sin as well as thine, for thou wilt be***

among the Companions of the Fire, and that is the reward of those who do wrong." (Al Maa'idah: 29) Mujahid expounds on the verse saying: This means, I will not proceed to fight you, though I am stronger than you. Should you kill me, you will commit the sin of killing me and thus add to your previous sins a new one. Ibn Katheer comments on this verse saying: It is not intended that the sins of the killed are transferred to the killer after his being slain, as many people imagine. But the slain will demand the killer to make amends for his crime. Since the good deeds of the killer may not be sufficient to pay the slain back his due in full, the sins of the slain are transferred to the record of the killer. This view finds support in authentic *Hadiths* concerning all acts of injustice, among which, perhaps even the worst of which, is murder. Yet, Allah knows best.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Abu Dawood, At-Tirmidhi report on the authority of Sa`d Ibn Abi Waqqaas that the latter said during the insurrection that took place during the caliphate of `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan, "I testify that Allah's Messenger said, *'There will be after me an insurrection in which the one who sits down will be better than the one who stands up, the one who stands up will be better than the one who walks, and the one who walks will be better than the one who runs.' Then Sa'd asked, 'What if a man comes to slay me inside my house?' He (the Messenger) said, 'Follow the example of the son of Adam.'* " Imam Moslem and compilers of *Sunan* report a narrative similar to this on the authority of Abu Dharr.

Allah says, ***"Then Allah sent a raven, who scratched the ground, to show him how to hide the shame of his brother. 'Woe is me!' said he; 'Was I not even able to be as this raven, and to hide the shame of my brother?' Then he became full of regrets."*** (Al Maa'idah: 31) As-Suddyy explains, Allah sent two ravens which fought each other. One of the two ravens killed the other, then scratched the ground, put the body of the

other raven in a hole and hid it with earth. Abel, having watched the raven do so, said, " ***'Woe is me!' said he; 'Was I not even able to be as this raven, and to hide the shame of my brother?' Then he became full of regrets.*** " (Al Maa'idah: 31) He then copied the raven and buried his brother.

The Death of Adam:

Muhammad Ibn Is-haaq states: When Adam was dying, he taught his son Sheath the hours of the day and night and the worship to be observed at such hours. He also informed him of the flood that would take place later on. It was claimed that all the ancestral lines of the children of Adam descended from Sheath. All of Adam's other sons vanished. However, Allah knows best. The word Sheath means "Allah's grace". Sheath was called so because he was born to Adam and Eve after Abel murdered Kane.

Ibn Katheer maintains: When Adam died on Friday, the angels brought embalming and burial shroud from Paradise. `Abdullaah, son of Imam Ahmad, mentions on the authority of Yahya Ibn Dumrah As-Saa`di: I saw an old man in the city delivering a lesson. When I inquired about him, people told me he was Ubayy Ibn Ka`b. He (Ubayy) said, "When death approached Adam, he said to his sons, 'My sons! I have a desire to eat from the fruits of the Garden.' They went to fetch him what he requested. On their way, they met the angels that asked them, 'Sons of Adam! What are you looking for and where are you going?' They replied, 'Our father is ill and he desires to eat from the fruits of the Garden. They (the angels) said to them, 'Go back as your father is now dead.' They (the angels) came (to Adam). When Eve saw them, she stuck to Adam. He said to her, 'Go away! I was deceived (by Iblis) through you. So do not stand between me and Allah's angels. They (the angels) washed him, shrouded and embalmed him.

They then dug a hole in the ground and put his body in a slit on the ground and offered prayer thereupon. They then put him in his grave and throw earth over him and said, 'O children of Adam! Such is the ceremony of burial that you should follow.'"

Ibn Katheer states: The exact life span of Adam had been a point of difference among scholars. In a *Hadith* narrated by Ibn `Abbaas and Abu Hurairah, it was mentioned that Adam's life span was recorded in the Preserved Tablet as a thousand years. It was said that Eve died a year following his death. Similarly, the location where Adam was buried was again a point of difference among scholars. Many scholars believe that he was buried in India next to the mountain on which he descended from Paradise. It was also proposed that this mountain is the Abu Qubais Mount in Makkah (i.e. Makkah). It was further said that when the flood took place, Noah (Nuh) carried the remnants of Adam and Eve in a box and buried them in Jerusalem. Yet Allah knows best.

When Adam died, his son Sheath was to undertake the mission after his father. According to a *Hadith* which was reported by Ibn Hibbaan in his *Saheeh* on the authority of Abu Dharr, Sheath was a Prophet and fifty books were revealed on him.

When death approached Sheath, he had his son Anush succeed him. So Qainin, son of Anush, succeeded his father, then Mihlayil, son of Qainin, was in authority. Non-Arab narrators claim that Mihlayil was the king of the Seven Regions and the first to cut trees and establish cities and big fortresses. They also claim that he was the founder of Babylon and the Far Sausse. When Mihlayil died, his son, Yard, succeeded him. When Yard was on his dying bed, he recommended that his son Khanukh succeed him. According to many scholars, Khanukh is believed to be Prophet Enoch.

THE STORY OF PROPHET ENOCH (IDREES), PEACE BE ON HIM

His Lofty Status:

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"Also mention in the Book the case of Idrees: he was a man of truth (and sincerity), (and) a Prophet: And We raised him to a lofty station."*** (Maryam: 56-7) Ibn Katheer explains: In the verse, Allah, Exalted be He, praises Enoch and provides us with a truthful description of him as a Prophet and a man of truth and sincerity. He was the third Prophet after Adam and Sheath, peace be on them.

Ibn Is-haaq mentions that Enoch was the first to write with a pen. He was alive for 308 years of Adam's life.

Concerning Allah's verse, ***"And We raised him to a lofty station."*** (Maryam: 57), it was reported in an authentic *Hadith* which recounts the occasion of the Night Journey and the Ascent (Israa' and Mi`raaj) that the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by Enoch in the fourth heaven.

THE STORY OF PROPHET NOAH (NOOH), PEACE BE ON HIM

His Call to His People:

When idols were worshipped and people sank in disbelief and delusion, Allah, Exalted be He, sent Noah as the first messenger to the people of the earth. His people were called Banu Rasib (i.e. the sons of Rasib).

How Idolatry Was Initiated?

It was reported in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas, that he said, there were ten centuries between Adam and Noah, during all of which Islam was prevalent. Ibn Katheer states: If a century (Arabic *Qarn*, pl. *Qurun*) stands for a hundred years, this inevitably means that there were one thousand years between Adam and Noah. A century may also denote a generation, as in the verses, ***"How many generations have We destroyed after Noah? And enough is thy Lord to note and see the sins of His servants."*** (Al Israa': 17), ***"Then We raised after them another generation."*** (Al Mu'minoon: 31), ***"And also `Ad and Thamud, and the Companions of the Rass, and many a generation between them."*** (Al Furqaan: 38), ***"But how many (countless) generations before them have We destroyed."*** (Maryam: 74) In addition to the Prophetic *Hadith*, *"The best of generations [Qurun] is that of mine..."* Based on this, it becomes clear that word *Qarn* in this context denotes a generation, not a hundred years, which means that there were thousands of years between Adam and Noah. Yet, Allah knows best.

Then after these succeeding righteous generations, conditions changed and ended with the worship of idols. The

reason behind that was mentioned in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas, when he interpreted the Qur'anic verse, ***"And they have said (to each other), `Abandon not your gods: abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa, neither Yaguth nor ya'uq, nor Nasr."*** (Nooh: 23) Ibn `Abbaas says: The names mentioned in the verse were the names of pious people among the people of Noah. After their death, Satan incited their people to erect stone memorials in the places where those pious people used to sit, and to call them after their names. As time passed by and people's faith waned, these stone memorials were worshipped. Idol-worshipping consequently spread widely among Arabs.

Ibn Jareer mentions on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Qais that the latter said, they (the people whose names mentioned above) were pious people who lived in the period between Adam and Noah. They had followers who followed in their footsteps. When they died, their followers said, 'If we erect statues to them, this will be a good incentive to urge us to exert more effort in worship.' Thus, they put up statues to them. After the death of the followers, Iblis insinuated to their successors convincing them that their predecessors used to worship them (the people to whom the statues were erected) and supplicate them for rain. Accordingly, they were worshipped.

Ibn Abi Haatim states, on the authority of Abu Ja`far Al-Baqir, that he said, Wadd was a pious man who used to be humble among his people. When he died, his people stood around his grave in Babylon feeling sorry. When Iblis saw this, he assumed the form of a man and told them, "I see your sorrow for the death of this man. I can, if you like, shape you a statue that resembles him to be put up as a memorial in your meeting place." They agreed to the idea. He then came to them again and said, "I can, if you like, erect you small statues of

Wadd so that you may place them in your houses." And again they agreed. As people multiplied, their progeny adopted their ancestors' view regarding Wadd. But when they started to forget with time, the statues of Wadd were idolized and began to be worshipped instead of Allah.

Ibn Katheer maintains: It was reported in the two authentic books of Moslem and Al-Bukhari that when Umm Salamah and Umm Habibah mentioned to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, the church which they saw in Abyssinia and described its magnificence and the figures they saw there, he (the Prophet) said, *"When a pious man among those people died, they used to build a place for worship over his grave and then shape such figures. Such people will be the most evil in the sight of Allah."*

When idols were worshipped and corruption spread throughout the earth, Allah, Exalted be He, sent his servant and messenger Noah to invite people to worship Allah and refrain from any other kind of worship. Thus, Noah was the first messenger on earth.

It was reported in the two authentic books of *Hadith*, the one by Moslem and the other by Al-Bukhari, on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said in the *Hadith* of intercession, *"...they will come to Adam and say, 'O Adam! You are the father of humankind. Allah created you with His hands, breathed life unto you of His spirit, commanded the angels to prostrate themselves to you and admitted you to live in Paradise. Would you intercede for us to your Lord? Do not you see what we are suffering from?' He will say, 'My Lord is now very angry. His wrath is unprecedented. Nor will He ever be that angry again. He forbade me to eat from the Tree but I disobeyed Him. I am now*

concerned with myself, I am now concerned with myself. Go to anyone but me! Go to Noah!' They will then come to Noah and say, 'O Noah! You are the first messenger sent on earth and Allah called you "a devotee most grateful." Do not you see what we are suffering from? Would you intercede for us to your Lord?' He (Noah) will say, 'My Lord is now very angry. His wrath is unprecedented. Nor will He ever be that angry again. I am now concerned with myself, I am now concerned with myself'..."

Noah's Call and His Denial of the Message:

Ibn Katheer says: Noah called on his people to worship Allah, Exalted be He, alone and not to associate anything with Him, i.e. not to worship an idol or a statue. He (Noah) said to them, ***" ' O my people! Worship Allah! Ye have no other god but Him. I fear for you the Punishment of a dreadful Day!' "*** (Al A`raaf: 59), ***"That ye serve none but Allah: verily I do fear for you the Penalty of a Grievous Day."*** (Hood: 26), and ***" 'O my People! I am to you a Warner, clear and open: That ye should worship Allah, fear Him, and obey me"*** (Nooh: 2-3)

He thus called on his people day and night, in public and in private, with promises one time and warnings the other. However, most of his people rejected his call and fought him and the believers. They threatened to stone them or to drive them out of their land. Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"The leaders of his people said: 'Ah! We see thee evidently wandering (in mind).' He said: 'O my people! No wandering is there in my (mind): on the contrary I am a Messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds!' "*** (Al `Araaf: 60-1) They told him, ***" 'We see (in) thee nothing but a man like ourselves: nor do we see that any follow thee but the meanest among us, in judgment immature: nor do we see in you (all)***

any merit above us: in fact we think ye are liars!" (Hood: 27).

According to their people, their worst sin was readily responding to the call to worship Allah, which, in fact, was their merit. For the clear truth does not require a great deal of thinking in order to be accepted. On the contrary, it should be followed and acted upon once it is declared. For this reason, Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said praising Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, *"Whenever I called on anybody to embrace Islam, he seemed to be greatly hesitant to embrace it at first except Abu Bakr, who never stammered (in uttering the two testimonies)."* For the same reason Abu Bakr was given the pledge of allegiance (following the Prophet's death) on the Day of Saqifah because his superiority to other Companions was then quite clear.

Noah answered his people saying, ***" 'O my People! See ye if (it be that) I have a Clear Sign from my Lord, and that He hath sent Mercy unto me from His own Presence, but that the Mercy,' "*** meaning his being a Prophet and messenger of Allah, ***" 'hath been obscured from your sight?' "*** meaning that you did not understand it and were not guided to it, ***" 'Shall we compel you to accept it when ye are averse to it?' "*** (Hood: 28) meaning that he could find a means to guide them while their conditions are worse than ever. Noah was thus kindly calling on them to join the right path. He further said, ***" 'And O my People! I ask you for no wealth in return: my reward is from none but Allah,' "*** meaning that he did not demand a wage in return for his call that will avail them in this worldly life and in the Hereafter. ***" 'But I will not drive away (in contempt) those who believe: for verily they are to meet their Lord, and ye, I see, are the ignorant ones!' "*** (Hood: 29) It seems form the context that his people demanded that he should drive away those who believed in his message, if he wanted them to meet

him. Yet, he did not accept this unjust condition.

Noah said, *" 'I tell you not that with me are the Treasures of Allah, nor do I know what is hidden, nor claim I to be an angel,' "* i.e. I am actually a servant of Allah's and His messenger. I do not know but the knowledge that Allah has endowed on me and I cannot do but what Allah has enabled me to do. I cannot bring about something good to myself or avoid harm except with the will of Allah, Exalted be He. *" 'Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise,' "* from among my followers, *" 'that Allah will not grant them (all) that is good: Allah knoweth best what is in their souls: I should, if I did, indeed be a wrong-doer,' "* (Yoosuf: 31) meaning, I cannot testify that they (my followers) will not be well rewarded by Allah in the Hereafter, since this is specific to Allah's knowledge. He is Well-Aware of them and will award them according to what is hidden in their souls.

Among his people's sayings is, *" 'Shall we believe in thee when it is the meanest that follow thee?' "* (Al Shu'araa': 111) He replied, *" 'And what do I know as to what they do? Their account is only with my Lord, if ye could (but) understand. I am not one to drive away those who believe. I am sent only to warn plainly in public.' "* (Al Shu'araa': 112-5)

His People's Insistence on Disbelief and His Invocation against Them:

Noah continued to call on his people to follow the way of Allah for quite a long time. Allah, Exalted be He, says concerning him, *"he tarried among them a thousand years less fifty: but the Deluge overwhelmed them while they (persisted in) sin."* (Al `Ankaboot: 14) Nonetheless, only a few of his people believed in him. Whenever a generation was about to

end, it instructed the following one not to believe in Noah and to fight him. A father would instruct his child, as soon as he was old enough to speak, never to believe in Noah.

Allah, Exalted be He, says, *" 'O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day: But my call only increases (their) flight (from the Right). And every time I have called to them, that Thou mightest forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance. So I have called to them aloud; Further I have spoken to them in public and secretly in private, Saying, `Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving; He will send rain to you in abundance; Give you increase in wealth and sons; and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers (of flowing water). What is the matter with you, that ye place not your hope for kindness and long-suffering in Allah, Seeing that it is He that has created you in diverse stages? See ye not how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another, And made the moon a light in their midst, and made the sun as a (Glorious) Lamp? And Allah has produced you from the earth, growing (gradually), And in the End He will return you into the (earth), and raise you forth (again at the Resurrection)? And Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet (spread out), That ye may go about therein, in spacious roads.' "* (Nooh: 5-20)

Allah, Exalted be He, also says: *"They said: 'O Noah! Thou hath disputed with us, and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us: now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speakest the truth!?' He said: 'Truly, Allah will bring it on you if He wills, (as He has power over all things) and then, ye will not be able to frustrate it! Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you*

(good) counsel, if it be that Allah willeth to leave you astray: He is your Lord! And to Him will ye return!' " (Hood: 32-4) This means that it is only Allah Who guides whomever He wills. Whenever Allah wishes to let someone go astray, none but Allah can guide him to the truth. He is the doer of all that He intends. He (Allah) knows well who deserves guidance and who deserves to go astray. He is full of wisdom and has the strongest argument that immediately confounded any opponent.

In addition to the disbelief of Noah's people in this life, they denied that a messenger was sent to them. Al-Bukhari reports, on the authority of Abu Sa`eed Al-Khudri, that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Noah will come along with his people (on the Day of Resurrection). Allah will say to them, 'Has not he (Noah) delivered the message to you?' They will reply, 'No. No Prophet came to us.' Allah will then say to Noah, 'Who is your witness (that you have conveyed the message to them)?' Noah will say, ' Muhammad and his people.' We (the Prophet talks about himself and his people) will bear witness to that. This is in accordance to Allah's saying,* ***"Thus have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves."*** (Al Baqarah: 143) *Thus the people of Prophet Muhammad will bear witness, along with him, that Noah was to convey the truth, and that he delivered Allah's message to his people as perfectly as it should be. Everything beneficial to them regarding their creed he ordered them to do, and everything harmful to them he warned them against. This is the case with all the Prophets. He (Noah) even warned his people against Antichrist, though he expected that they would not be contemporaneous with him, because he cared about them."*

Al-Bukhari mentions, on the authority of Ibn `Umar,

that he said, "The Prophet stood in front of people (to deliver a sermon). He then praised Allah with due praise, and made mention of Antichrist saying, *'I warned you against him. There was no Prophet but warned his people (against Antichrist). Noah warned his people. But I will tell you something about him (Antichrist) with which no other Prophet told his people. You should know that he (Antichrist) is one-eyed, while your Lord in not one-eyed.'* "

It was reported in the two authentic books of Moslem and Al-Bukhari, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Shall I tell you something about Antichrist which no other Prophet told his people? He (Antichrist) is one-eyed. He will bring with him things like Paradise and Hell. What he claims is Paradise is in fact Hell and what he claims is Hell is in fact Paradise. I warn you (against him) as Noah warned his people."* (The wording of Al-Bukhari.)

Noah gave up hope and realized that his people were beyond reform after he had been insulted, opposed and belied. He thus invoked Allah against them, and Allah answered his prayer. Allah says, ***"It was revealed to Noah! 'None of thy People will believe except those who have believed already! So grieve no longer over their (evil) deeds. But construct an Ark under Our eyes and Our inspiration, and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin: for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood).' "*** (Hood: 36-7)

Elsewhere Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"(In the days of old), Noah cried to Us, and We are the Best to hear prayer. And We delivered him and his people from the Great Calamity."*** (Al Saaffaat: 75-6) Allah also says, ***"(Remember) Noah, when he cried (to Us) aforetime: We listened to his***

(prayer) and delivered him and his family from great distress." (Al Anbiyaa': 76) Allah, Exalted be He, further says, ***"He said: 'O my Lord! Truly my people have rejected me. Judge Thou, then, between me and them openly, and deliver me and those of the Believers who are with me.' "*** (Al Shu'araa': 118) Allah further says, ***"Then he called on his Lord: 'I am one overcome: do Thou then help (me)!' "*** (Al Qamar: 10) Allah moreover says, ***"(Noah) said: 'O my Lord! Help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood!' "*** (Al Mu'minoon: 26) Allah the Almighty also says, ***"Because of their sins they were drowned (in the flood), and were made to enter the Fire (of Punishment); and they found - in lieu of Allah - none to help them". And Noah said: 'O my Lord! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth! For, if Thou dost leave (any of) them, they will but mislead Thy devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones.' "*** (Nooh: 25-7)

The Command to Build the Ark:

Ibn Katheer says: When the people of Noah drowned in sin, evil and disbelief and when their Prophet invoked Allah against them, He commanded Noah to build an ark which was matchless then and would remain so thereafter. Allah forbade Noah to argue with Allah concerning his people when he saw them stricken and tortured, as he might feel pity for them. For this reason Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin: for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood)."*** (Hood: 37) Allah, Exalted be He, then says, ***"Forthwith he (starts) constructing the Ark: every time that the Chiefs of his People passed by him, they threw ridicule on him. He said: 'If ye ridicule us now, we (in our turn) can look down on you with ridicule likewise!' "*** This means that Noah and his followers ridiculed the disbelievers among his people and wondered about their stubbornness and

disbelief which would bring about their ruin and expose them to torture. ***"But soon will ye know who it is on whom will descend a Penalty that will cover them with shame, on whom will be unloosed a Penalty lasting."*** (Hood: 39) Allah moreover says, ***" 'O my Lord! Help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood!' So We inspired him (with this message): Construct the Ark within Our sight and under Our guidance"*** (Al Mu'minoon: 26-7) i.e. in order to guide you to the correct way.

Exegetes of the Qur'an differ as to the length and width of the ark. It is mentioned in the Torah (The Old Testament) that it was 300 cubit long and 50 cubit wide. There were many other opinions as well. As for its height, it is claimed that the ark was 30 cubit high. It consisted of three floors, of 10 cubit high each. The lower floor was assigned to animals and beasts, the middle floor to people and the upper floor to birds. The door, which was on the side of the ark, was covered from top to bottom. The ark was built from Saj wood. It is also claimed that it was made from pine wood, according to the Torah. Yet, Allah knows best.

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"When comes Our command, and the fountains of the earth gush forth," meaning that the earth gushes forth and water dominates its entirety that even ovens, which are naturally the places where fires are kindled, gush with water also, "take thou on board pairs of every species, male and female, and thy family - except those of them against whom the Word has already gone forth - and address Me not in favor of the wrong-doers; for they shall be drowned (in the Flood)."*** (Al Mu'minoon: 27) This means that Allah commanded Noah to take with him aboard the ark pairs of every species, made up from a male and female, to guarantee their survival through reproduction. Allah

also ordered him to take along his family, ***"except those of them against whom the Word has already gone forth,"*** i.e. except the disbelievers, among whom was his son Noah who eventually drowned. Allah ordered Noah not to argue for or intercede on the part of the disbelievers who were to be ruined.

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"At length, behold! There came Our Command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth! We said: 'Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female, and your family - except those against whom the Word has already gone forth - and the Believers.' "*** (Hood: 40) This happened in spite of the long period of time that Noah spent with his people calling on them to worship Allah day and night, promising Allah's forgiveness and good reward for whoever believes in Him and warning against disobedience and disbelief.

Scholars differ concerning the number of survivors on board. According to Ibn `Abbaas, they were eighty men and women. Ka`b Al-Ahabar, however, claims that they were seventy-two. Scholars also differ concerning the destiny of Noah's wife. Some maintain that she died before the deluge. Others postulate that she was among those who drowned due to her disbelief. She bore all of Noah's sons; Ham, Sam, Yafith, Yam (Biblical Can`an) and `Abir.

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"And when thou hast embarked on the Ark - thou and those with thee - say: 'Praise be to Allah, Who has saved us from the people who do wrong.' And say: 'O my Lord! Enable me to disembark with Thy blessing: for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark.' "*** (Al Mu'minoon: 28-9) Allah ordered Noah to praise Him for enabling him to build the ark and for saving him from the deluge. Allah also avenged him from those who opposed and belied him. Thus, it has been made the norm to

start every act with supplication to Allah that it will be blessed and that its results will be pleasant. Thus, Allah says, ***"That has created pairs in all things, and has made for you ships and cattle on which ye ride, In order that ye may sit firm and square on their backs, and when so seated, ye may celebrate the (kind) favor of your Lord, and say, 'Glory to Him Who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this (by ourselves). And to our Lord, surely, must we turn back!'"*** (Al Zukhruf: 12-4) Allah said to his Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, when he immigrated from Makkah to Medina,***"Say: 'O my Lord! Let my entry be by the Gate of Truth and Honour, and likewise my exit by the Gate of Truth and Honour; and grant me from Thy Presence an authority to aid (me).'"*** (Al Israa': 80) Noah abided by Allah's instruction and said, ***" 'Embark ye on the Ark, in the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest! for my Lord is, be sure, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!'"*** (Hood: 41).

The Deluge Takes Place:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"So the Ark floated with them on the waves (towering) like mountains."*** (Hood: 42) Ibn Katheer expalins: Allah caused rain to fall on earth like it has never done before, nor will it ever do thereafter. It poured down incredibly heavily. Allah also commanded the earth to gush out springs from every spot. Allah says: ***"Then he called on his Lord: 'I am one overcome: do Thou then help (me)!' So We opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring forth. And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs. So the waters met (and rose) to the extent decreed. But We bore him on an (Ark) made of broad planks and caulked with palm-fibre: She floats under Our eyes (and care): a recompense to one who had been rejected (with scorn)!"*** (Al Qamar: 10-14)

Allah the Almighty also says, ***"We, when the water (of Noah's Flood) overflowed beyond its limits, carried you (mankind), in the floating (Ark), That We might make it a Message unto you, and that ears (that should hear the tale and) retain its memory should bear its (lessons) in remembrance."*** (Al Haaqqah: 11-12).

Some exegetes state: The water reached the top of the highest mountain on earth, i.e. it went fifteen cubit high. It was also posulated that the water rose for eighty cubits. It dominated the entire globe, its mountains, barren lands and deserts so that none of the creatures that previously lived on earth survived.

He Is Not of Thy Family:

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest): 'O my son! Embark with us, and be not with the Unbelievers!' The son replied: 'I will betake myself to some mountain: it will save me from the water.' Noah said: 'This day nothing can save, from the Command of Allah, any but those on whom He hath mercy!' and the waves came between them, and the son was among those overwhelmed in the Flood."*** (Hood: 43)

Ibn Katheer explains: This was Noah's son, Yam, who was a disbeliever and was killed. Allah mentions Noah's imploration to Him concerning his drowned son and his inquiring about his destiny. Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"And Noah called upon his Lord, and said; 'O my Lord! Surely my son is of my family! and Thy promise is true, and Thou art the Justest of Judges!' He said: 'O Noah! He is not of thy family: for his conduct is unrighteous. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge! I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant!' Noah said: 'O my Lord! I do seek***

refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge. And unless Thou forgive me, and have Mercy on me, I should indeed be lost!' " (Hood: 45-7). This means Noah asked Allah, You promised me to save my family. My drowned son was among my family. Allah answered telling him that his drowned son was not counted among his surviving family members, as He said to him, ***"and thy family - except those of them against whom the Word has already gone forth."*** (Al Mu'minoon: 27) Thus, his son was among those against whom the word of Allah came to pass; for he was drowned due to his disbelief.

The Cease of the Deluge and the Extermination of the Disbelievers:

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"Then the word went forth: 'O earth! Swallow up thy water, and O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!' and the water abated, and the matter was ended. The Ark rested on Mount Judi, and the word went forth: 'Away with those who do wrong!"*** (Hood: 44) When all the people on earth were ruined except those who worshipped Allah alone, explains Ibn Katheer, Allah ordered the earth to swallow up its water and the sky to stop raining, ***"and the water abated,"*** meaning rainfall almost ceased, ***"and the matter was ended,"*** meaning the destiny of the disbelievers was precisely what Allah has predestined, ***"and the word went forth: 'Away with those who do wrong!' "*** They were called upon and informed that they will be deprived of Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"But they rejected him, and We delivered him, and those with him in the Ark: but We overwhelmed in the Flood those who rejected Our Signs. They were indeed a blind people!"*** (Al A`raaf: 64) Allah also says, ***"They rejected him, but We delivered him, and those with***

him, in the Ark and We made them inherit (the earth), while We overwhelmed in the Flood those who rejected Our Signs, Then see what was the end of those who were warned (but heeded not)!" (Yoonus: 73) He further says, ***"We helped him against people who rejected Our Signs: truly they were a people given to Evil: so We drowned them (in the Flood) all together."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 77) Allah the Almighty also says: ***"So We delivered him, and those with him, in the Ark filled (with all creatures). Thereafter We drowned those who remained behind. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful."*** (Al Shu'araa': 199-22) Allah moreover says in this context: ***"But We saved him and the Companions of the Ark, and We made the (Ark), a Sign for all Peoples!"*** (Al `Ankaboot: 15) Allah says concerning the story of Noah: ***"And We have left this as a Sign (for all time): then is there any that will receive admonition? But how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning? And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?"*** (Al Qamar: 15-17) Allah talks about the disbelievers among the people of Noah saying: ***"Because of their sins they were drowned (in the flood), and were made to enter the Fire (of Punishment); and they found - in lieu of Allah - none to help them. And Noah said: 'O my Lord! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth! For, if Thou dost leave (any of) them, they will but mislead Thy devotees, and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones.' "*** (Nooh: 25-7) Allah answered the supplication of Noah and there survived none of the disbelievers.

The Coming Down of the Ark:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"The word came: 'O Noah! Come down (from the Ark) with Peace from Us, and Blessing***

on thee and on some of the Peoples (who will spring) from those with thee: but (there will be other) Peoples to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time), but in the end will a grievous Penalty reach them from Us.' " (Hood: 48)

Ibn Katheer says: When the ground began to be drained and it was possible to settle and walk on it, Allah ordered Noah to land the ark on Mount Judi. He The Almighty says, ***"The word came: 'O Noah! Come down (from the Ark) with Peace from Us, and Blessing on thee and on some of the Peoples (who will spring) from those with thee,' "*** (Hood: 48) meaning come down with peace and blessings from your Lord on you and your children who will be born later on. This is because none of the survivors had progeny except Noah. This finds support in the Glorious Qur'an in Allah's saying, ***"And made his progeny to endure (on this earth)."*** (Al Saaffaat: 77) This means that all the people on earth now are the descendants of Adam's three sons; Sam, Ham and Yafith. Imam Ahmad mentions, on the authority of Samurah, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Sam is the father of the Arabs, Ham is the father of the Abyssinians, and Yafith is the father of the Romans."*

Muhammad Ibn Is-haaq says: When Allah wanted the deluge to stop, He caused wind to blow across the surface of the earth. As a result, water ceased to gush out of springs and began to be drained until it dried up. The ark then landed on Mount Judi. Forty days later Noah opened a window of the ark and released a raven to report to him the status of water, but it did not come back. He then released a pigeon. It returned without any trace in its legs, which proves that it never landed on earth. Seven days later, he released it again. It returned with an olive leave in its beak. He deduced that water dried up from the surface of the earth. He waited for another seven days and

released the pigeon anew, but it did not come back. Hence he knew that the surface of the earth became completely visible and the land appeared. He then uncovered the ark and it was said, "***O Noah! Come down (from the Ark) with Peace from Us, and Blessing***".

Ibn Katheer states: The People of the Book mention that when Noah came down from the ark, Allah promised him not to repeat the event of the deluge and set the rainbow as a sign and memorial of such promise. Ibn `Abbaas states that the rainbow is a symbol of safety from drowning. Some scholars mention that the bow was without a hypotenuse, which indicated that clouds will never cause such deluge again. All divine religions unanimously agree on the occurrence of the deluge, that it inundated the whole earth and that none of the disbelievers outlived it, in response to the supplication of Noah, to bring about such an event.

The Death of Noah:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"We (once) sent Noah to his people, and he tarried among them a thousand years less fifty: but the Deluge overwhelmed them while they (persisted in) sin."*** (Al `Ankaboot: 14) Ibn Katheer states: This means that Noah lived with his people for 950 years after the mission. Only Allah knows how many years he lived before and after that.

Ibn Jareer and other followers state that the grave of Noah is in the Sacred Mosque. Ibn Katheer maintains: This report is stronger and more authentic than reports narrated by late scholars, who maintain that his grave is located in Beqa' presently known as Karak Noah. However, Allah knows best.

THE STORY OF PROPHET HUD (HOOD), PEACE BE UPON HIM

His Call:

Ibn Katheer states: Hud belonged to a tribe called `Ad Ibn 'Aus Ibn Sam Ibn Noah. It dwelt in Yemen between Oman and Hadramaut in a city overlooking the sea called Shahr, within which he lived in a valley called Mughith. The inhabitants were nomads who lived in tents with huge poles. Allah, Exalted be He, says in this regard, ***"Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the `Ad (people) Of the (city of) Iram, with lofty pillars,"*** (Al Fajr: 6-7) meaning `Ad Iram which is the earlier clan of `Ad. However, the second clan of `Ad came to exist later on.

Arabs who lived before Ishmael (Isma`il) were called the `Ariba Arabs. They consisted of many tribes including `Aad, Thamood, Jurhum, Tasaam, Jadis, Amim, Madyan, `Imaq, `Ubail, Jasim, Qahtaan, the Banu Yaqtun, and others. As for the Musta`riba Arabs, they were the descendants of Ishmael. Ishmael was the first to speak Arabic, as he adopted Arabic from the Jurhum tribe who dwelt near his mother Hajar in the Makkan Sanctuary. Allah enabled Ishmael to speak Arabic very fluently, as was the case with Prophet Muhammad.

The Denial of His People:

Ibn Katheer states: The ancient `Ad were the first to worship idols after the deluge. This is clear from Prophet Hud's telling them, ***" 'Call in remembrance that He made you inheritors after the people of Noah, and gave you a stature tall among the nations' "*** (Al A`raaf: 69) meaning that Allah made them the strongest among their contemporaries. Allah also

refers to them saying, ***"Then We raised after them another generation,"*** (Al Mu'minoon: 31) which, according to the soundest opinion, is a reference to the people of Hud.

Allah sent to them a Prophet from among themselves, i.e. Hud to call on them to worship Allah alone. They turned a deaf ear to him and even belittled him. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"To the `Ad people', (We sent) Hood, one of their (own) brethren: he said: 'O my people! Worship Allah! Ye have no other god but Him. Will ye not fear (Allah)?' The leaders of the Unbelievers among his people said: 'Ah! We see thou art an imbecile!' and 'We think thou art a liar!' "*** (Al A`raaf: 65-6) The verse shows that they argued, we find that what you call on us to worship is nonsense compared to our idols from which victory and sustenance are sought. Rather we think that you are a liar when you claim that Allah sent you as a Prophet. Hud answered them, ***" 'O my people! I am no imbecile, but (I am) a Messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds! I but fulfil towards you the duties of my Lord's mission: I am to you a sincere and trustworthy adviser.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 67-8) He did not demand a reward nor gratuity from them in return for his call. Thus he said in another situation, ***" 'O my people! I ask of you no reward for this (Message). My reward is from none but Him Who created me: will ye not then understand?' "*** (Hood: 51) Hud reprimanded them for being so idle-minded that they did not even try to understand his call to the manifest truth that their own nature should bear witness to it. They even told him, ***" 'O Hood! No Clear (Sign) hast thou brought us, and we are not the ones to desert our gods on thy word! Nor shall we believe in thee! We say nothing but that (perhaps) some of our gods may have seized thee with imbecility,' "*** (Hood: 53-54) meaning you have not brought us a miracle to support your claim. Thus we will not abandon our deities on account of your

baseless claim. We rather think that you have turned imbecile because you outraged our deities.

Hud therefore challenged them saying, " *'I call Allah to witness, and do ye bear witness, that I am free from the sin of ascribing, to Him, Other gods as partners! So scheme (your worst) against me, all of you, and, give me no respite,'* " (Hood: 54-5) meaning if your deities can bring about benefit or harm, as you suppose, I hereby announce my abandoning all of them. I even challenge and curse them all. Thus, you may rally efforts and plot against me with all might and main and put into actions all your plans against me as soon as possible, for I do not care a bit. " *'I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its forelock,'* " i.e. under his dominion and power. " *'Verily, it is my Lord that is on a straight Path,'* " (Hood: 56) meaning He is the just Monarch that never transgresses.

This challenge was in itself a solid proof that he was a Prophet sent by Allah, since they could not reach him nor harm him in any way. This confirmed what he had told them and was a proof of his being truthful. On the other hand, this proved the falsity of the principles they abided by and the corruption of their ideologies.

The same argument was made before by Noah when he said, " *'O my People! If it be hard on your (mind) that I should stay (with you) and commemorate the Signs of Allah, yet I put my trust in Allah. Get ye then an agreement about your plan and among your Partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite.'* " (Yoonus: 71) The same thing was also said by Abraham (Ibrahim) to his people, " *'I fear not (the beings) ye associate with Allah: unless my Lord willeth,*

(nothing can happen). My Lord comprehendeth in His knowledge all things. Will ye not (yourselves) be admonished? How should I fear (the beings) ye associate with Allah, when ye fear not to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you? Which of (us) two parties hath more right to security? (Tell me) if ye know. It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong, that are (truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance.' That was the reasoning about Us, which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people: We raise whom We will, degree after degree: for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge."(Al An`aam: 80-3)

Allah, Exalted be He, says concerning the people of Hud: *"And the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved and denied the Meeting in the Hereafter, and on whom We had bestowed the good things of this life, said: 'He is no more than a man like yourselves; he eats of that of which ye eat, and drinks of what ye drink. If ye obey a man like yourselves, behold, it is certain ye will be lost.' "* (Al Mu'minoon: 33-4) They rejected the idea that Allah might send messengers from among the human beings. This argument was proposed by the disbelievers in ancient and modern times. Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"What kept men back from Belief when Guidance came to them, was nothing but this: they said, 'Has Allah sent a man (like us) to be (His) Messenger?' Say: 'If there were settled, on earth, angels walking about in peace and quiet, We should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for a Messenger.' "* (Al Israa': 94-5) Allah also says: *"Is it a matter of wonderment to men that We have sent Our inspiration to a man from among themselves? That he should warn mankind (of their danger)"* (Yoonus: 2)

Thus, Hud said to his people, *" 'Do ye wonder that*

there hath come to you a message from your Lord, through a man of your own People, to warn you.' " (Al A`raaf: 63) Is this strange? It is Allah alone who knows best where and how to carry out his mission. His people further said concerning Hud and his message, " ***'Does he promise that when ye die and become dust and bones, ye shall be brought forth (again)?'*** This shows their denial of the resurrection after death and the returning of life after bodies decayed and turned into dust and fragile bones. They added, ***"Far, very far is that which ye are promised! There is nothing but our life in this world! We shall die and we live! But we shall never be raised up again!'*** " meaning when a generation dies out, another simply succeeds, as proposed by some people in the dark who said, Wombs throw out and graves swallow up! " ***'He is only a man who invents a lie against Allah, but we are not the ones to believe in him!' (The Prophet) said: 'O my Lord! Help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood.'*** " (Al Mu'minoon: 35-9)

Hud preached his people saying, " ***'Do ye build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves?*** " meaning do you construct a magnificent building on each elevated ground merely to show off, since you are really in no need to do that? " ***'And do ye get for yourselves fine buildings,'*** " palaces or pigeon towers " ***'in the hope of living therein (forever)?'*** " i.e. expecting that you will live therein for a long time, ***"And when ye exert your strong hand, do ye do it like men of absolute power? Now fear Allah, and obey me. Yea, fear Him Who has bestowed on you freely all that ye know. Freely has He bestowed on you cattle and sons, And Gardens and Springs. Truly I fear for you the Penalty of a Great Day.'*** " (Al Shu'araa': 128-35)

Torture Befalls the Disbelivers:

Ibn Katheer states: The people of Hud told him, " *'It is the same to us whether thou admonish us or be not among (our) admonishers! This is no other than a customary device of the ancients, and we are not the ones to receive Pains and Penalties!'* " (Al Shu'araa': 136-8) Elsewhere they said, " *'Comest thou to us, that we may worship Allah alone, and give up the cult of our fathers? Bring us what thou threatenest us with, if so be that thou tellest the truth!'* " (Al A`raaf: 70)

Hence, Hud replied, " *'Punishment and wrath have already come upon you from your Lord: dispute ye with me over names which ye have devised - ye and your fathers - without authority from Allah? Then wait: I am amongst you, also waiting.'* " (Al A`raaf: 71) Saying this, you have incurred Allah's wrath and his punishment is thus impending. Do you refuse to worship Allah Who Has no partner and would rather worship idols that you yourselves sculpted and held as deities?! If you persist in your rejection of the truth and insist on falsehood, expect the inevitable torture of Allah to befall you.

Allah mentions the story of the extermination of the people of Hud more than once in the Qur'an. He the Almighty says, *"(The Prophet) said: 'O my Lord! Help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood.' (Allah) said: 'In but a little while, they are sure to be sorry!' Then the Blast overtook them with justice, and We made them as rubbish of dead leaves (floating on the stream of Time)! So away with the people who do wrong!"* (Al Mu'minoon: 39-41) Allah, Exalted be He, also says: *"They said: 'Hast thou come in order to turn us aside from our gods? Then bring upon us the (calamity) with which thou dost threaten us, if thou art telling the truth!' He said: 'The knowledge (of when it will come) is only with Allah: I*

proclaim to you the mission on which I have been sent: but I see that ye are a people in ignorance!...' Then, when they saw the (Penalty in the shape of) a cloud traversing the sky, coming to meet their valleys, they said, 'This cloud will give us rain!' 'Nay, it is the (calamity) ye were asking to be hastened! A wind wherein is a Grievous Penalty! Everything will it destroy by the command of its Lord!" then by the morning they, nothing was to be seen but (the ruins of) their houses! Thus do We recompense those given to sin!" (Al Ahqaaf: 22-5) Allah further says: *"We saved him and those who adhered to him, by Our Mercy and We cut off the roots of those who rejected Our Signs and did not believe."* (Al A`raaf: 72) Allah, moreover, says: *"So they rejected him, and We destroyed them. Verily in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful."* (Al Shu'araa': 139-40) Again the Qur'an recounts the story of their ruin as such, *"So when Our decree issued, We saved Hood and those who believed with him, by (special) Grace from Ourselves: We saved them from a severe Penalty. Such were the `Ad People: they rejected the Signs of their Lord and Cherisher; disobeyed His Messengers; and followed the command of every powerful, obstinate transgressor. And they were pursued by a Curse in this Life, and on the Day of Judgment. Ah! Behold! For the `Ad rejected their Lord and Cherisher! Ah! Behold! Removed (from sight) were `Ad, the People of Hood!"* (Hood: 58-60)

Details of their extermination is given in the following verse, *"Then, when they saw the (Penalty in the shape of) a cloud traversing the sky, coming to meet their valleys, they said, 'This cloud will give us rain!' 'Nay, it is the (calamity) ye were asking to be hastened! A wind wherein is a Grievous Penalty!"* (Al Ahqaaf: 24) This was the first stage of torture. There was a drought and when they sought water, they saw

clouds traversing the sky and thought Providence was having mercy on them, when it was a sign of torture. Thus Allah says: ***"Nay, it is the (calamity) ye were asking to be hastened!"*** meaning the torture that they asked Hud to befall them. This was a response to their saying, ***" 'Then bring upon us the (calamity) with which thou dost threaten us, if thou art telling the truth!' "*** (Al Ahqaaf: 22)

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And the `Ad; they were destroyed by a furious Wind, exceedingly violent;"*** which was cold and strong. ***"He made it rage against them seven nights and eight days in succession: so that thou couldst see the (whole) people lying prostrate in its (path), as if they had been roots of hollow palm-trees tumbled down!"*** that have no top. The wind happened to carry one of the disbelievers and raise him high then throw him down with his head facing the ground, thus his body remained without a head. ***"Then seest thou any of them left surviving?"*** (Al Haqqah: 6-8)

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"For We sent against them a furious wind, on a Day of violent Disaster."*** (Al Qamar: 19) Allah further says: ***"And in the `Ad (people) (was another Sign): behold, We sent against them the devastating Wind"*** which did not move clouds or pollinate trees, thus it was a barren wind that carried them no benefit. Allah describes it saying: ***"It left nothing whatever that it came up against, but reduced it to ruin and rottenness."***(Al Dhaariyaat: 41-2) As for Allah's saying, ***"A wind wherein is a Grievous Penalty!"*** it is probable that such grievous penalty was what befell them as a result of the furious, cold and exceedingly violent wind which lasted for seven nights and eight days, and killed all people. It even followed them to their caves, got them out and killed them. It demolished their lofty buildings and tore down their well-built palaces. As they took pride in their strength and said,

" 'Who is superior to us in strength?' What! Did they not see that Allah, Who created them, was superior to them in strength? But they continued to reject Our Signs!," Allah directed to them what overpowered them all, i.e. the devastating wind.

Ultimately, wind stirred clouds, which got the few survivors from among the people of Hud to think that it was a cloud carrying mercy for them. However, Allah sent it to strike sparks and start fires. This resembles the case of the people of the overshadowing gloom, who were first tortured by the cool wind then by the blazing fire. Torture induced by a thing and then by its opposite is considered the severest type of all. Added to all this was the blast that was mentioned in, ***"Then the Blast overtook them with justice, and We made them as rubbish of dead leaves (floating on the stream of Time)! So away with the people who do wrong!"*** (Al Mu'minoon: 41)

Moslem narrates in his *Saheeh* on the authority of \`Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, who said that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, when the wind blew would say, *'O Allah! I ask you from its good, the good of what it contains and the good of that with which it had been sent. And I seek your refuge from its evil, the evil of what it contains and the evil of that with which it had been sent.'* " \`Aa'ishah recounted, "Whenever the sky became cloudy, His (the Prophet's) color changed and he would get in and out and walk back and forth. But when the rain fell, he felt relieved. I observed this and asked him (about it), so he said, "*I fear it is like the saying of the people of \`Ad,* ***"Then, when they saw the (Penalty in the shape of) a cloud traversing the sky, coming to meet their valleys, they said, 'This cloud will give us rain!' "*** (Al Ahqaaf: 24)

THE STORY OF PROPHET SAALIH, PEACE BE UPON HIM

His Call:

Ibn Katheer states: Thamood was a tribe of the Musta`riba Arabs who dwelt in the region between Hijaz and Tabuk. They lived after the people of `Ad and, like them, were idol-worshippers. Allah then sent them a man from among themselves, i.e. Saalih. He called on them to worship Allah alone and abandon idolatry. Some of them accepted his call but most disbelieved and insulted him with words and action. Worse still, some tried to kill him. Furthermore, they killed the she-camel which Allah set as a miracle to refute their claims. Therefore, Allah punished them as can only be done by One That is Exalted in Power, and Able to carry out His Will.

The Denial of His People:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"To the Thamood people (We sent) Saalih, one of their own brethren: he said: 'O my people! Worship Allah; ye have no other god but Him. Now hath come unto you a Clear (Sign) from your Lord! This she-camel of Allah is a Sign unto you: so leave her to graze in Allah's earth, and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment. And remember how He made you inheritors after the `Ad people and gave you habitations in the land: ye build for yourselves palaces and castles in (open) plains, and carve out homes in the mountains; so bring to remembrance the benefits (ye have received) from Allah, and refrain from evil and mischief on the earth.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 73-4) Ibn Katheer explains: This means that Allah made them successors to the people of `Ad so that they might learn a lesson from what was inflicted on them and would not follow in their footsteps. Allah enabled them to

erect whatever palaces they wished. In another verse, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And ye carve houses out of (rocky) mountains with great skill."*** (Al Shu'araa': 149)

Saalih continues to say, ***" 'then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him (in repentance)' "*** i.e. give up what you indulged in and devote yourselves to Allah. ***"' for my Lord is (always) near, ready to answer.' "*** (Hood: 61) i.e. if you comply, Allah will accept your repentance and forgive your previous sins. Their answer, however, was, ***" 'O Saalih! Thou hast been of us! a center of our hopes hitherto!' "*** i.e. we used to think of you as a man of sound mind before you brought to us your claim concerning the worship of a single god and the abandoning of the deities which our fathers and forefathers worshipped. ***" 'Dost thou (now) forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped? But we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which thou invitest us.' "*** (Hood: 62)

Saalih then says, ***"He said: 'O my people! Do ye see? if I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord and He hath sent Mercy unto me from Himself, who then can help me against Allah if I were to disobey Him? What then would ye add to my (portion) but perdition?' "*** (Hood: 63) Prophet Saalih tells his people, suppose that what I invite you to follow is the truth, what excuse will you find for contradicting it in the sight of Allah? How can you attain salvation when you yourselves want me to abandon my call to worship Him? Should I comply with your demand, none of you or any other people would be saved from Allah's torture.

The Trial of the She-Camel:

Exegetes state that while the people of Thamood were gathered one day, Prophet Saalih invited them to worship

Allah. He preached them and warned them against opposing his call. They pointed to a nearby rock and said, if you can bring us a she-camel out of that rock with such and such description, we will believe in your call. He said, "Will you surely believe in me if I bring you what you have asked?" They replied, yes, we will. He then made them pledge that they would and thereupon stayed in his worship place praying to Allah asking Him to bring them what they asked for. Allah then commanded the rock to cleave asunder and a pregnant she-camel appeared in its midst that accorded with the description which they formerly demanded. Some of them believed and most of them persisted in disbelief and stubbornly went astray. Allah says: ***"We sent the She-camel to the Thamud to open their eyes, but they treated her wrongfully."***(Al Israa': 59) As the verse points, most of them denied the truth and did not follow it despite the fulfillment of their demand. Allah says concerning them, ***"They said, 'Thou art only one of those bewitched! Thou art no more than a mortal like us: then bring us a Sign, if thou tellest the truth!"*** (Al Shu'araa': 153-4) Thus they challenged him to bring about some miracle to prove the truthfulness of his claim. ***"He said: 'Here is a she-camel: she has a right of watering, and ye have a right of watering, (severally) on a day appointed. Touch her not with harm, lest the Penalty of a Great Day seize you.' "*** (Al Shu'araa': 155-6).

The same situation was highlighted elsewhere in the Qur'an in the following verse, ***" 'Now hath come unto you a Clear (Sign) from your Lord! This she-camel of Allah' "*** Here Prophet Saalih attributes the she-camel to Allah by way of honoring it, just like saying, 'the house of Allah' when referring to a mosque or to the Ka`bah for example. ***" '(It) is a Sign unto you:' "*** a proof that supports the truthfulness of my claim. ***" 'So leave her to graze in Allah's earth, and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous***

punishment. ' " (Al A`raaf: 73)

Allah further speaks about the miracle of the she-camel saying, ***"For We will send the she-camel by way of trial for them."*** to test them, and see whether they will believe or persist in their denial. However, Allah is Well-Aware of their conduct beforehand. ***"So watch them (O Saalih),"*** to find out how they would react. ***"And possess thyself in patience!"*** i.e. tolerate the harm they would direct at you, since you will witness their end. ***"And tell them that the water is to be divided between them: each one's right to drink being brought forward (by suitable turns)."*** (Al-Qamar: 27-8) Another verse concerning the she-camel goes, " ***'she has a right of watering, and ye have a right of watering, (severally) on a day appointed.'*** " (Al Shu'araa': 155) The she-camel remained among them grazing in their lands. It used to drink on alternate days, a day for it and another for the people.

"Then they hamstrung the she-camel, and insolently defied the order of their Lord!" Ibn Katheer states: After a long time, the noble among the people of Thamood gathered and agreed to hamstring the she-camel to rid themselves of it and save the water that it drank. Allah recounts this, ***"Then they hamstrung the she-camel, and insolently defied the order of their Lord!"*** (Al Israa': 77)

Ibn Jareer and other exegetes state that there were two women from Thamood, one of whom was called Saduq and belonged to a rich family of noble descent. She was the wife of a man from Aslam tribe, then they separated. She then called her cousin, whose name was Masra', and offered herself to him on the condition that he would hamstring the she-camel. The other woman was an aged disbeliever called `Unaizah. She offered her four daughters to one of the chiefs of their tribe

whose name was Qudar Ibn Saalif. Should he hamstrung the she-camel, she would let him choose whomever he desired from among her daughters.

Therefore, the two men were assigned to carry out the mission. They then propagated the cause among their people, which made seven more men join them in their endeavor, making up a total of nine. About these the Qur'an said, ***"There were in the City nine men of a family who made mischief in the land, and would not reform."*** (Al Naml: 48) All nine men toured their tribe, trying to obtain people's consent regarding hamstringing the she-camel. When people gave them their approval, they traced down the she-camel. When it returned from the watering place, Masra', who had been lying in ambush for it, shot it with an arrow which hurt the bones of its leg. Qudar then slew it with his sword. It fell dead on the ground after sounding a single sharp cry to warn its young camel. The Qur'an recounts the event as follows, ***"Then they ham-strung the she-camel, and insolently defied the order of their Lord, saying: 'O Saalih! Bring about thy threats, if thou art a Messenger (of Allah)!' "*** (Al `Araaf: 77)

Elsewhere Allah says: ***"But they called to their companion, and he took a sword in hand, and hamstrung (her). Ah! how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning!"*** (Al Qamar: 29-30) Allah tells us about that event: ***"Behold, the most wicked man among them was deputed (for impiety). But the Messenger of Allah said to them: 'It is a She-camel of Allah! And (bar her not from) having her drink!"*** Allah warned them not to harm it. ***"Then they rejected him (as a false Prophet), and they hamstrung her. So their Lord, on account of their crime, obliterated their traces and made them equal (in destruction, high and low)! And for Him is no fear of its consequences."*** (Al Shams: 12-15)

Ibn Katheer states: Their discourse displayed utter disbelief in many ways:

- They disobeyed Allah's command delivered by His messenger not to hamstring the she-camel which had been sent to them as a sign. Thus they incurred the torture mentioned in the verse, ***"And inflict no harm on her, or a swift Penalty will seize you!"*** In another verse, the penalty was described as the Penalty of the Great Day. In a third verse in *Surah,* "Al A`raaf", verse number 73, it was described as a grievous punishment.
- They hastened the infliction of torture on them.
- They belied their messenger despite the fact that he brought them proof of the truthfulness of his call. Though they were well aware of the truth, they denied it and turned a deaf ear to the warnings of torture.

Allah's Inevitable Punishment Befalls Them:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"But they did hamstring her. So he said: 'Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days: (then will be your ruin): (behold) there a promise not to be belied!' "*** (Hood: 65) Ibn Katheer explains: When the she-camel fell on the ground after Qudar Ibn Saalif, may he be cursed, had hamstrung it, the rest of the nine men started cutting its body into pieces with their swords. When its young camel saw that, it fled away heading for the top of a mountain and cried thrice. Thus, Saalih told the disbelievers among his people, ***" 'Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days,' "*** after the present day. They again did not believe in his warning, rather they plotted to kill him and thus make sure his destiny is the same as that of the she-camel.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"They said: 'Swear a***

mutual oath by Allah that we shall make a secret night attack on him and his people, and that we shall then say to his heir (when he seeks vengeance): 'We were not present at the slaughter of his people, and we are positively telling the truth.' " (Al Naml: 49) Regarding their plotting, Allah says: ***"They plotted and planned, but We too planned, even while they perceived it not. Then see what was the end of their plot! This, that We destroyed them and their people, all (Of them). Now such were their houses, - in utter ruin - because they practiced wrong-doing. Verily in this is a Sign for people of knowledge. And We saved those who believed and practiced righteousness."*** (Al Naml: 50-3) Allah thus hurled stones on the group who intended to murder Prophet Saalih which hit them on the head and killed them prior to the extermination of the remaining disbelievers of their people.

On Thursday morning, the first day of the respite, people of Thamood woke up with yellowness in their faces, just as Saalih had warned them. When the night fell, they reminded one another that a day had passed from the time limit. On Friday morning, the second day of the respite, they woke up with redness in their faces. In the evening, they again reminded one another that the second day had passed. On Saturday morning, the third day of the last enjoyment, they woke up with black faces. As the night fell, they called out, the respite terminated.

On Sunday morning, they prepared themselves for death and waited the imminent punishment, not knowing what kind of torture would be inflicted on them and whence it would come. When the sun rose, a blast overtook them from the sky and the earth violently quaked beneath them. Thus, they succumbed to death, souls departed their bodies, all kinds of motion ceased, and no voices were heard. All people became motionless. Allah

describes their state saying, ***"As if they had never dwelt and flourished there. Ah! Behold! for the Thamood rejected their Lord and Cherisher! ah! behold! removed (from sight) were the Thamood!"*** (Hood: 68)

The Qur'an describes the attitude of Saalih following the destruction of his people as such, ***"So Saalih left them, saying: 'O my people! I did indeed convey to you the message for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but ye love not good counselors!' "*** (Hood: 79) Saalih then talked to the dead bodies of his people after their extermination as he was departing their land ***" 'O my people! I did indeed convey to you the message for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel,' "*** Here Prophet Saalih tells them how he spared no effort in guiding them, by words and actions. ***" 'but ye love not good counselors.' "*** i.e. your nature did not accept the truth and could not cope with it. Thus, you led yourselves to that tragic end, namely eternal torture.

Thus Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, talked to the polytheists who were killed in Qalib Badr, three days following the battle of Badr, when he was riding his mount and giving his commands to the army to march home at the last hours of night. He told them, *" 'O people of Qalib Badr, have you really attained what your Lord promised you? I myself have attained what my Lord promised me...What a bad clan were you to your Prophet! You belied me when other people believed in me, expelled me when other people sheltered me, fought against me when other people supported me! What a bad clan were you towards your Prophet! `Umar Ibn Al-Khattab asked him, 'Are you talking to dead bodies?!' He replied, 'By Him in Whose hands is my soul, they can hear my words just as clearly as you can, only they cannot reply.' "*

Imam Ahmad mentions on the authority of `Abdullaah Ibn `Umar that on the year of Tabuk when the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by the valley of Hijr in the lands inhabited by Thamood, he said, *"Do not enter these lands except weeping. If you cannot weep, do not enter, lest you should be afflicted with what they were afflicted with."*

The Death of Saalih:

Ibn Katheer maintains: It was reported that Saalih, peace be upon him, moved to the Sanctuary of Allah and stayed there until he died. Yet, Allah, Exalted be He, knows best.

THE STORY OF PROPHET ABRAHAM [IBRAHIM], THE CLOSE ONE TO ALLAH

His Call:

According to the reports of the People of the Book, his name is Abraham son of Terah (Tarikh). He was born, along with his two brothers Nahur and Haran, in the Kaldanian lands, that is Babylon and its neighboring areas, in a city located between Tigris and Euphrates. Haran was the father of Prophet Lot.

Ibn Katheer comments: This is the most famous narrative among biographers and historians. According to the reports of the People of the Book, Abraham married Sarah, who was barren. The two of them then, along with his father Terah and his nephew Lot, headed for the land of Canaanites, i.e. Jerusalem. When they reached Harran in Iraq, Terah died at the age of 250. Abraham then stayed there with his wife and nephew Lot. Harran then was the land of Kashdanites, as well as the lands of Jazirah and Syria. Ibn Katheer states: The people of Harran worshipped the stars and idols. Thus, all dwellers of the earth were disbelievers at that time except Abraham, Sarah and Lot, peace be upon them.

His Call to His Father:

Ibn Katheer mentions: Allah bestowed on Abraham laudable rectitude. Allah then made him His Prophet and chose him to be His Close One when he grew old. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct, and well were We acquainted with him."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 51) The first person Abraham called was his father who worshipped idols. The Qur'an recounts: ***"Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: 'Takest thou idols for gods? For I see***

thee and thy people in manifest error.' " (Al An`aam: 47) This indicates that his father's name was Azar. The majority of scholars of lineage, including Ibn `Abbaas are of the view that his father's name is Tarikh. The People of the Book pronounce it Terah. Ibn Jareer postulates: Perhaps he had two names or a name and a nickname. Allah knows best.

Allah says concerning Abraham's call to his father, ***"(Also) mention in the Book (the story of) Abraham: he was a man of truth: a Prophet. Behold, he said to his father: 'O my father! why worship that which heareth not, and seeth not and can profit thee nothing? O my father! to me hath come knowledge which hath not reached thee: so follow me: I will guide thee to a Way that is even and straight. O my father! serve not Satan: for Satan is a rebel against (Allah) Most Gracious. O my father! I fear lest a Penalty afflict thee from (Allah) Most Gracious, so that thou become to Satan a friend.' (The father) replied: 'Dost thou hate my gods, O Abraham? If thou forbear not, I will indeed stone thee: now get away from me for a good long while!' Abraham said: 'Peace be on thee: I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness: for He is to me Most Gracious. And I will turn away from you (all) and from those whom ye invoke besides Allah: I will call on my Lord: perhaps, by my prayer to my Lord, I shall be not unblest.' "*** (Maryam: 41-8)

Here Allah recounts the argument between Abraham and his father and how he invited him to the truth gently, explaining to him the falsehood of worshipping idols that could not hear the supplication of their worshippers or see where they were. How could such idols then support them or provide them with sustenance?! He told his father of the beneficial knowledge and guidance endowed on him by Allah despite his young age, saying, ***" 'O my father! To me hath come knowledge which***

hath not reached thee: so follow me: I will guide thee to a Way that is even and straight,' " meaning the straightforward easy clear way that would lead you to all that is good in this world and in the Hereafter.

His father turned a deaf ear to his advice and even threatened him saying," ***'Dost thou hate my gods, O Abraham? If thou forbear not, I will indeed stone thee: now get away from me for a good long while!'*** "Abraham answered him saying, " ***'Peace be on thee,'*** " meaning I would never harm you in any way. He even assured him saying, " ***'I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness: for He is to me Most Gracious,'*** " as He has guided me to worship Him. For this reason, Abraham said, " ***'And I will turn away from you (all) and from those whom ye invoke besides Allah: I will call on my Lord: perhaps, by my prayer to my Lord, I shall be not unblest.'*** "

Abraham asked Allah to forgive his father as He had promised him, but when it appeared to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him. He was therefore told by the Qur'an in the following verse, ***"And Abraham prayed for his father's forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him: for Abraham was most tender-hearted, forbearing."*** (Al Tawbah: 114)

Al-Bukhari states on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Abraham will meet his father Azar on the Day of Resurrection while the face of the latter will be black and covered with dust. Abraham will say to him, 'Have you not disobeyed me?' His father will reply, 'Today I will not disobey you.' Abraham will discourse with his Lord saying, 'O Lord! You have promised me that you*

will not disgrace me on the day when all men will be raised up. What disgrace can be greater than abandoning my father?' Allah will say, 'I have made Paradise prohibited to the disbelievers.' Then Abraham will be told, 'O Abraham! Look what is beneath your feet!' He will see a slain animal besmeared with blood, which will be seized by its hands and legs and will be cast headlong into the Hellfire."

Abraham's Argument with the People of Harran:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude. When the night covered him over, he saw a star: he said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said: 'I love not those that set.' When he saw the moon rising in splendor, he said: 'This is my Lord.' But when the moon set, he said: 'Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray.' When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he said: 'This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all).' But when the sun set, he said: 'O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah. For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah.' His people disputed with him. He said: '(Come) ye to dispute with me, about Allah, when He (Himself) hath guided me? I fear not (the beings) ye associate with Allah: unless my Lord willeth, (nothing can happen). My Lord comprehendeth in His knowledge all things. Will ye not (yourselves) be admonished? How should I fear (the beings) ye associate with Allah, when ye fear not to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you? Which of (us) two parties hath more right to security? (Tell me) if ye know. It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong, that are***

(truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance.' That was the reasoning about Us, which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people: We raise whom We will, degree after degree: for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge." (Al An`aam: 75-83)

Ibn Katheer states: This is a case of argument between Abraham and his people. He showed them that the heavenly bodies which they worshipped could not be taken for gods, as they were mere creatures under Allah's command. They rose one time, set another time and could be absent from the world altogether. But Allah has the knowledge of everything and nothing is hidden from Him. He is the Everlasting and none is a god but He.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"When the night covered him over, he saw a star,'*** which is said to be planet Venus. Abraham proved to the people of Harran that it was not fit to be a god. He then turned to the moon which is more luminous, then to the sun which is brighter and even greater in splendor. He then explained to them that such planets were submissive to the Will of Allah. This is in accordance to Allah's saying, ***"Among His Signs are the Night and the Day, and the Sun and the Moon. Adore not the sun and the moon, but adore Allah, Who created them, if it is Him ye wish to serve."*** (Fussilat: 37)

Thus, when Abraham saw the sun rising in splendor, he said: ***" 'This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all).' But when the sun set, he said: 'O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah. For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah.' "*** His people disputed with him. He said: ***" '(Come) ye to dispute with me, about Allah, when He (Himself) hath guided me? I fear not (the beings) ye associate with Allah: unless my Lord***

willeth, (nothing can happen),' " (Al An`aam: 78-80) meaning I do not care about your gods that you worshipped, as they are useless and are not able to hear or understand.

It appears that Abraham's above preaching was directed to the people of Harran, since they worshipped stars. As for the people of Babylon, they were idol-worshippers. He held another argument with them and tore down their idols, mocked them and explained to them the falsity of their belief.

Abraham's Argument with the People of Babylon:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct, and well were We acquainted with him. Behold! he said to his father and his people, 'What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?' They said, 'We found our fathers worshipping them.' He said, 'Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your fathers.' They said, 'Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?' He said, 'Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. He Who created them (from nothing): and I am a witness to this (truth). And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols - after ye go away and turn your backs'... So he broke them to pieces (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it. They said, 'Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety!' They said, 'We heard a youth talk of them: he is called Abraham.' They said, 'Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness.' They said, 'Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?' He said: 'Nay, this was done by, this is their biggest one! Ask them, if they can speak intelligently!' So they turned to themselves and said, 'Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!' Then were they confounded with shame: (they***

said) 'Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!" (Abraham) said, 'Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm? Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah! Have ye no sense?'... They said, 'Burn him and protect your gods, if ye do (anything at all)!' We said, 'O Fire! Be thou cool. And (a means of) safety for Abraham!' Then they sought a stratagem against him: but We made them the ones that lost most!" (Al Anbiyaa': 51-70)

The Qur'an again tells the story of Abraham as follows, *"And rehearse to them (something of) Abraham's story. Behold, he said to his father and his people: 'What worship ye?' They said: 'We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them.' He said: 'Do they listen to you when ye call (on them), or do you good or harm? They said: 'Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do).' He said: 'Do ye then see whom ye have been worshipping, Ye and your fathers before you? For they are enemies to me; not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds; Who created me, and it is He Who guides me; Who gives me food and drink, And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me; Who will cause me to die, and then to live (again); And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment... O my Lord! bestow wisdom on me, and join me with the righteous.'"* (Al Anbiyaa': 69-83)

Allah further says: *"And (We also saved) Abraham: behold, he said to his people, 'Serve Allah and fear Him: that will be best for you, if ye understand! For ye do worship idols besides Allah, and ye invent falsehood. The things that ye worship besides Allah have no power to give you sustenance: then seek ye sustenance from Allah, serve Him, and be grateful to Him: to Him will be your return. And if ye reject (the Message), so did generations before you: and the duty of*

the Messenger is only to preach publicly (and clearly). See they not how Allah originates creation, then repeats it: truly that is easy for Allah.' Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation; so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things. He punishes whom He pleases, and He grants mercy to whom He pleases, and towards Him are ye turned. Not on earth nor in heaven will ye be able (fleeing) to frustrate (His Plan), nor have ye, besides Allah, any protector or helper. Those who reject the Signs of Allah and the Meeting with Him (in the Hereafter), it is they who shall despair of My mercy: it is they who will (suffer) a most grievous Penalty.' So naught was the answer of (Abraham's) people except that they said: 'Slay him or burn him.' But Allah did save him from the Fire. Verily in this are Signs for people who believe. And he said: 'For you, ye have taken (for worship) idols besides Allah, out of mutual love and regard between yourselves in this life; but on the Day of Judgment ye shall disown each other and curse each other: and your abode will be the Fire, and ye shall have none to help.' But Loot had faith in him: he said: 'I will leave home for t Loot he sake of my Lord: for He is Exalted in Might, and Wise.' And we gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation, and We granted him his reward in this life; and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the Righteous." (Al `Ankaboot: 16-27)

Allah, Exalted be He, also says: *"Verily among those who followed his Way was Abraham. Behold, he approached his Lord with a sound heart. Behold, he said to his father and to his people, 'What is that which ye worship? Is it a falsehood- Gods other than Allah that ye desire? Then what is your idea about the Lord of the Worlds? Then did he cast a glance at the Stars, And he said, 'I am indeed sick (at heart)!'*

So they turned away from him, and departed. Then did he turn to their gods and said, 'Will ye not eat (Of the offerings before you)? What is the matter with you that ye speak not (intelligently)?' Then did he turn upon them, striking (them) with the right hand. Then came (the worshippers) with hurried steps, and faced (him). He said: 'Worship ye that which ye have (Yourselves) carved? But Allah has created you and your handiwork! They said, 'Build him a furnace, and throw him into the blazing fire!" (This failing), they then sought a stratagem against him, but We made them the ones most humiliated!" (Al Saaffaat: 83-98)

Ibn Katheer states: Abraham objected to idol-worshipping and scorned it. He told his people, ***" 'What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?' They said, 'We found our fathers worshipping them.' "*** (Al Anbiyaa': 51-2) On a different occasion, Abraham argued with his people concerning idols saying, ***" 'Do they listen to you when ye call (on them), or do you good or harm?' They said: 'Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do).' "*** (Al Shu'araa': 72-4) They acknowledged the fact that their idols were not able to hear whoever called them, nor bring about benefit or harm. However, they worshipped them merely because their forefathers did so. Thus, Abraham told them, ***" 'Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your fathers.' "*** (Al Anbiyaa': 54) Elsewhere in the Qur'an, we are told that he said to them, ***" 'Do ye then see whom ye have been worshipping, Ye and your fathers before you? For they are enemies to me; not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds.' "*** (Al Shu'araa': 75-7) This was solid proof of the falsehood of their belief, since Abraham denied them and scorned them. Had they been able to inflict harm on him, they would have done.

Abraham's people replied, ***" 'Have you brought us the***

Truth, or are you one of those who jest?' " Are you serious in what you are saying concerning our deities, or are you simply joking? He said, " ***'Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. He Who created them (from nothing): and I am a witness to this (truth).'*** " Indeed I am quite serious in what I have told you. Your God is Allah, there is no God but Him. He is your Lord and the Lord of everything, the Creator of heavens and earth, the sole One worthy of worship, there is no associate with Him and I bear witness to that. " ***'And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols - after ye go away and turn your backs.'*** " (Al Anbiyaa': 55-7) It was reported that Abraham only whispered this last phrase to himself. Ibn Mas`ood though maintains that it was audible and some of his people heard him.

His people had an annual feast. They used to gather downtown and celebrate it. When his father invited him to join them, he apologised under the pretext that he was sick. Allah speaks of this event saying: ***"Then did he cast a glance at the Stars and said, 'I am indeed sick (at heart)!' So they turned away from him, and departed."*** They went to witness the festival and left him alone in their town. ***"Then did he turn to their gods'"*** He stealthily went to their idols and found them in a great column structure and diverse kinds of food were left in front of them by way of offerings. He then said to them mockingly: " ***'Will ye not eat (Of the offerings before you)? What is the matter with you that ye speak not (intelligently)?' Then did he turn upon them, striking (them) with the right hand.*** " (Al Saaffaat: 88-93) This is so because the right hand is stronger and faster. Thus he broke them to pieces with an ax. Allah says: ***"So he broke them to pieces (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 58) He put the ax in the hand of the biggest idol that his people might think that it grew jealous of them and wished to be worshipped alone to the exclusion of all the rest. When

they returned back, they found out what had befallen their deities. They said, *" 'Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety!' "* (Al Anbiyaa': 59) This indicates clearly their lack of sensibility and ignorance, as what had befallen their idols was a crystal clear proof that they were not real gods. Had they been so, they would have been able to defend themselves. In the middle of their confusion, they said, *"We heard a youth talk of them: he is called Abraham."* (Al Anbiyaa': 60) We heard a youth speaking ill of our gods. According to the view of Ibn Mas'ood, some of them heard him say, *"And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols - after ye go away and turn your backs"* (Al Anbiyaa': 57) They promptly said, *"Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness."* (Al Anbiyaa': 61) They wished people to listen to what he was going to say and to witness the punishment that was to be inflicted on him. This was what Abraham intended exactly. His purpose was to gather the greatest number of people and refute their argument concerning idol-worshipping, just as Prophet Moses (Musa) said to Pharaoh, *" 'Your tryst is the Day of the Festival, and let the people be assembled when the sun is well up.' "*(Taa Haa: 59)

When they came to him, they asked, *" 'Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?' He said: 'Nay, this was done by - this is their biggest one!' "* meaning it incited me to do so. *" 'Ask them, if they can speak intelligently!"* (Anbiyaa': 62-3) He intended to prove to them that their god could not talk so that they might acknowledge the fact that these were mere motionless stones. *"So they turned to themselves and said, 'Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!' "* (Al Anbiyaa': 64) They blamed themselves for leaving their gods without guard. *"'Then were they confounded with shame' "*Qatadah says: The people were overtaken by great confusion and they kept quiet for some time, then said, *"'Thou knowest*

full well that these (idols) do not speak!' " (Al Anbiyaa': 65) You, Abraham, know well that these idols do not speak. How then do you demand us to ask them? Abraham then retorted, ***" 'Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm? Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah! Have ye no sense?' "*** (Al Anbiyaa': 66-7)

Elsewhere in the Glorious Qur'an Allah says: ***"Then came (the worshippers) with hurried steps, and faced (him). He said: 'Worship ye that which ye have (Yourselves) carved?"*** (Al Saaffaat: 94-5) How can you worship idols that you yourselves carve from wood and stones and shape whichever way you like? ***" 'But Allah has created you and your handiwork!' "*** (Al Saaffaat: 96) You and your idols are both mere creatures. How can a created being then worship a created thing?

Abraham's Salvation from the Fire:

Ibn Katheer states: When the people of Abraham ran out of arguments, they resorted to the use of power and authority to support their fallacious ideologies. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"They said, 'Build him a furnace, and throw him into the blazing fire!" (This failing), they then sought a stratagem against him, but We made them the ones most humiliated!"*** (Al Saaffaat: 97-8) In *Surah,* "Al Anbiyaa'", Allah speaks of the same event saying: ***"They said, 'Burn him and protect your gods, if ye do (anything at all)!' "*** (Al Anbiyaa': 68) But it was Allah's will to give supremacy to His word and religion. ***"We said, 'O Fire! be thou cool. and (a means of) safety for Abraham!' Then they sought a stratagem against him: but We made them the ones that lost most!"*** (Al Anbiyaa': 69-70)

The people of Abraham spent a long time roaming the

area to collect firewood. When a woman among them fell ill, she vowed that if she recovered, she would participate in collecting firewood to burn Abraham! They then put the whole amount of firewood they collected in a huge pit and set it on fire. The fire produced sparks, the like of which were never seen before. They then put Abraham in a catapult and tied him to it. Meanwhile Abraham kept uttering the words, *'la ilaha illa anta subhanak, laka al-hamd wa laka al-mulk, la sharika lak'* i.e. there is no god but Thee, to Thee all praise and sovereignty is due, there is no associate with Thee. When they threw him into the fire, he said, *'Hasbuna Allah wa ni'mal-wakil*, i.e. for me Allah suffices and He is the best disposer of affairs.

Al-Bukhari states on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that he said, The words *'Hasbuna Allah wa ni'mal-wakil'* were made up by Abraham, the Close One, when he was thrown into the fire, and by Prophet Muhammad when he was told, ***"A great army is gathering against you, so fear them': but it (only) increased their Faith; they said: 'For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs.' And they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah; no harm ever touched them"*** (Aali `Imraan: 173-4)

Some of the righteous ancestors mention that Gabriel appeared to Abraham hanging between the sky and the earth and told him, Abraham! Do you need anything? He replied, As from you, I need nothing. Ibn `Abbaas states that the angel of rain went on saying, When will I be commanded to let fall rain? But Allah's decree was far faster. Allah says: ***"We said, 'O Fire! be thou cool. and (a means of) safety for Abraham!"*** (Al Anbiyaa': 69) `Ali Ibn Abi Talib said, This meant that fire would not harm him. Ibn `Abbaas said: Had Allah not said ***"and (as a means of) safety"*** the coolness of the fire might have hurt him. As-Suddyy states: Abraham was accompanied

by the angel of shadow. Ibn Katheer maintains: Abraham was in a green garden surrounded by fire, while people were looking at him. Neither could they reach him, nor could he get out to them. Abu Hurairah said, "The best words uttered by Abraham's father were those he said when he saw his son in such a situation. He said, 'How good is your Lord, Abraham!' " Allah says: ***"Then they sought a stratagem against him: but We made them the ones that lost most!"*** (Al Anbiyaa': 70) In another verse Allah states: ***"We made them the ones most humiliated!"*** (Al Saaffaat: 98) Thus, though they sought victory, they were defeated and though they sought supremacy, they were humiliated.

Al-Bukhari states on the authority of Umm Sharik that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, ordered the gecko to be killed and said, *"It used to blow out (the fire) against Abraham."* Imam Ahmad mentions on the authority of Nafi` who said that Sumamah, the freed female-slave of Ibn Al-Mughirah said, "I entered upon `Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, and found in her house a spear. I asked, 'For what purpose do you use that spear, mother of the believers?' She said, 'To kill geckos, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, told us that when Abraham was thrown into the fire, all the creatures of the earth tried to put out fire, except geckos which blew it against him. Thus Allah's Messenger ordered us to kill it.'

Abraham's Argument with Nimrod (Namrood):

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Hast thou not turned thy vision to one who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had granted him power? Abraham said: 'My Lord is He Who giveth life and death.' He said: 'I give life and death.' Said Abraham: 'But it is Allah that causeth the sun to rise from the East: do thou then cause him to rise from***

the West?' Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected Faith. Nor doth Allah give guidance to a people unjust." (Al Baqarah: 258)

Exegetes and scholars of genealogy, in addition to reports, maintain that that man was king of Babylon, whose name was Nimrod. His reign lasted for 400 years. He was an unjust and tyrannical ruler. He was one of the four kings who dominated the entire earth. Two were believers, i.e. Solomon and Dhul-Qarnain and two disbelievers, i.e. Nebuchadnezzar (Bukhtunassar) and Nimrod (Namrood).

When Abraham invited Nimrod to worship Allah alone, his arrogance, ignorance, and expectations of a long life urged him to deny the existence of his Creator. Rather he claimed that he was a god. Allah says: ***"Abraham said: 'My Lord is He Who giveth life and death.' He said: 'I give life and death.' "*** Qatadah says: This means that when two convicts were sentenced to death, he would release one of them and execute the other. Thus he claimed that he could bring one to life and end the life of the other! Ibn Katheer maintains: This is irrelevant to the subject of the argument. It neither negates nor opposes what Abraham mentioned about the might of his Lord. Abraham quoted the parable of bringing creatures to life and causing them to die as proof of the existence of a Doer of this, since it is impossible for neither of the two events could happen haphazardly. When this point was not clear enough to some of the people present, he provided further proof of the existence of the Creator. Allah recounts this as such: ***"But it is Allah that causeth the sun to rise from the East. Do thou then cause him to rise from the West?"*** Allah, the sole God and Creator, ordered the sun to rise in the east every morning. If you are a god, as you claim to be, you may order it to rise in the west. The one who brings about life and causes death is, in turn, able to do whatever he wishes and subdue all things to his will. If

you cannot do that, you are not the god you claim to be. Rather, you are weak and inferior as you cannot create a being as small as a mosquito. Allah says: ***"Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected Faith. Nor doth Allah give guidance to a people unjust."*** (Al Baqarah: 258)

As-Suddyy mentions that such argument took place after Abraham was saved from the fire. Zaid Ibn Aslam states, people used to go to Nimrod in deputations to take their provision. Abraham was once on a deputation to see him. This was his very first time to ever meet him. It was then that argument took place among them. Allah then sent an angel to Nimrod inviting him to believe in Allah, but he rejected. The angel invited him again and again he rejected. At the third time, he rejected saying, 'You should mobilize your army and I will mobilize mine.' Nimrod then paraded his armies, but Allah sent against them a swarm of mosquitoes that devoured their flesh and sucked their blood. A mosquito entered into the nostrils of Nimrod and remained in for many years, during which he was severely tortured. In order to alleviate his pain, he was beaten on the head with rods until he was killed.

Abraham's Immigration to Egypt:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"But Loot had faith in him: he said: 'I will leave home for the sake of my Lord: for He is Exalted in Might, and Wise.' And we gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation, and We granted him his reward in this life; and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the Righteous."*** (Al `Ankaboot: 26-7)

Allah also says: ***"But We delivered him and (his nephew) Loot (and directed them) to the land which We have blessed for the nations. And We bestowed on him Isaac and,***

as an additional gift, (a grandson), Jacob, and We made righteous men of every one (of them). And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practise regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)." (Al Anbiyaa': 71-3)

Ibn Katheer explains: When Abraham's people persisted in their disbelief, he took his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot and began a journey to a place in which he could worship Allah and call unto people to worship Him, too. Imam Ahmad mentions on the authority of Abu Hurairah who said, Abraham entered a town in Egypt in which there was a tyrannical ruler. It was conveyed to him that a stranger (Abraham) entered Egypt at night along with a woman who was a paragon of beauty (Sarah). The ruler called him to his presence and asked him about the woman who was with him. Abraham told him that she was his sister. (Ibn Katheer comments: Abraham meant she was his sister in faith.) The ruler ordered Abraham to send her to him. When Abraham returned home, he told his wife about the conversation that took place between himself and the ruler, so that she might not say anything contrary to what he had said. He told her that there was not a believing spouse then on earth except him and her, besides his nephew Lot of course.

When she was admitted before the ruler, he stood up and approached her. She performed the ablution and prayed, 'O Allah! If You know that I have believed in You and Your messenger and guarded my chastity except for my husband, save me from the grip of this disbeliever. The ruler plunged into water until he was about to die. She said, 'Allah! If he dies, they will accuse me of killing him.' He was thus saved. He got up again and approached her. She performed ablution and prayed, 'O Allah! If you know that I have believed in You and Your messenger and guarded my chastity except for my

husband, do give this believer an access to me. The ruler plunged into water until he was about to die. She said, 'Allah! If he dies, they will accuse me of killing him.' He was thus saved. At the third or fourth time, the ruler cried, 'You sent me but a devil. Return her to Abraham and give her Hajar (a slave) as a present.' When she returned to Abraham, she said to him, 'Do you know that Allah frustrated the plotting of the disbelievers and offered us a female-slave!'

Ibn Katheer states: Afterwards Abraham, his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot departed from Egypt and returned to Palestine with much money and cattle. Hajar, the Egyptian Coptic girl accompanied them. At the request of Abraham, Lot headed for Al-Ghaur and settled in Sodom, which was then the capital of these lands. Its people were very mischievous and licentious disbelievers.

The Birth of Ishmael (Isma`eel):

The People of the Book state: When Abraham asked Allah to grant him good progeny, Allah gave him the tidings that He would answer his prayer. When he settled for years in Jerusalem, Sarah told him, 'As Allah deprived me of children, you may marry Hajar, hoping that she begets children to you.' Hajar then became pregnant and this made her feel proud over his mistress Sarah. The latter felt jealous on account of that and complained to Abraham, who told her to treat her whichever way she wished. This caused Hajar to grow afraid. She therefore fled to a nearby spring of water. An angel came to her and reassured her telling her that she would give birth to a child whose name would be Ishmael. He added that the boy would be of a distinguished status among people. She thereupon gave thanks to Allah, returned back and gave birth to Ishmael. That was 13 years prior to the birth of Isaac. Abraham then was 86 years old. Ibn Katheer states: The jealousy of Sarah escalated to

the point that she asked Abraham to get Hajar out of her sight. He answered her request, for a matter that Allah had decided. He took her and her son to a faraway place, which is the present Makkah.

The Migration to Makkah:

Al-Bukhari mentions on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas who said, The first woman to wear a girdle was Hajar, who wore it to wipe out her footprints so that Sarah would not be able to track them down. Abraham journeyed with Hajar and her infant Ishmael until they settled by the Sacred House beside a tree to the north of the Well of Zamzam. Makkah was not inhabited then. There was no water there. He had them settle there, left them a skin of water and a basket of dates, then set off returning home. At this point, Hajar followed him crying out, 'Abraham! Are you going to depart and leave us in this valley where no people live or where there is nothing for subsistence?' She repeated the question, but he did not turn to her. She asked him, 'Did Allah order you to do so?' He replied, 'Yes.' She said, 'Then, He will not leave us to die.' She then returned back. Abraham walked on. When he reached the Thaniayh where he was hidden from her, he faced the House and raised his hands supplicating to Allah, ***" 'O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Thy Sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular Prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with Fruits: so that they may give thanks.' "*** (Ibraheem: 37) Hajar went on nursing Ishmael and drinking from the water. When the water ran out, she and her baby felt thirsty. When she saw the baby twisting with thirst, she went away so as not to see him suffer. She found Mount Safa, which was the nearest mountain to her and climbed it up. She then faced the valley

and looked out for any newcomer, but there was none. She then descended Mount Safa and headed for the valley. When she reached there, she pulled the tip of her chemise and walked hastily but with tiredness. When she crossed the valley and reached Mount Marwa, she climbed it up and looked out hoping to spot anyone, but she did not. She repeated this seven times.

Ibn `Abbaas reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"For this reason people have to walk hastily between them (Safa and Marwa). When she was near Mount Marwa, she heard a sound and said, 'Hearken!" (talking to herself). She then listened attentively and heard the same sound. She then directed her speech to the sound saying, 'I have heard you, so appear if you can help.' She then found the angel in the location of the Well of Zamzam. The angel dug the ground with his heal or with his wing until water sprung out. She went on limiting it from the four directions and took handfuls of water and put it in her container, while water kept gushing out every time she took a handful."*

In `Abbaas reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"May Allah mercy the mother of Ishmael. Had she left the Well of Zamzam (without taking handfuls thereof), it would have become a flowing fountain."*

She then drank and nursed her baby. The angel told her, "Do not fear from perishing. Here lies the location of Allah's House, which will be built by this baby and his father later on. Allah does not hazard the lives of its dwellers. The House was then as high above ground as a mound. The floods washed out its right and left sides. She stayed for sometime until a group of the tribe Jurhum, who were coming from the way of Kada', passed by her. When they went down Makkah, they observed a bird going round and round. They knew that the bird observed water in that spot. They were astonished as they were familiar

with this valley and knew that it was totally void of water. They sent one or two messengers to find out what the matter was. The messengers spotted the water and hurried back to the group to inform them thereof. They came upon the mother of Ishmael, while she was standing by the water. They sought her permission to settle with her. She permitted them but told them that they had no right over the water, and they accepted her condition.

Ibn `Abbaas states that Allah's Messenger said, *"This happened while the mother of Ishmael by nature had a tendency to form social relations. They settled there and sent for their families and relations who also came to live there."* When families grew in number and Ishmael became a youth and learned Arabic from them, they admired him. When he attained maturity, they married him to one of their women. Ishmael's mother then died. Abraham once went to visit Ishmael after his marriage, but did not find him. When he asked his wife about him, she told him that he went out to seek provision. He then asked her about their conditions of living. She told him that they suffered bad living conditions and distress, and complained to him about that. He then asked her to convey his greetings to her husband and tell him to replace his doorstep[1]. When Ishmael returned home, he sensed that someone had visited them. Thus he asked his wife about that. She described to him the visitor, whom he recognized as his father, and told him that he had asked her about him and repeated to him her answer. She also told him the old man had asked her about their conditions of living and told him what she answered him. Ishmael asked her whether the old man had left him a message so she conveyed his message to him. At the end, he told her that the visitor was his father and that the message was actually

[1] To replace one's footstep is an Arabic expression figuratively used to mean divorce one's wife and marry another.

an order for him to leave her. Thus Ishmael ordered her to go back to her family, divorced her and married another.

It was long afterwards that Abraham decided to visit his son anew. When he visited Ishmael, he did not find him and so asked his new wife the same questions that he had asked the first. She told him that they enjoyed good living conditions and prosperity. She also praised Allah. He asked her about their food and drink and she answered that they ate meat and drank water. He supplicated Allah to bless their meat and water.

Ibn `Abbaas mentions that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"There were then no grains. Had there been grains, he would have supplicated Allah to bless them, too."* Abraham told his daughter-in-law to convey his greeting to her husband and tell him to establish his doorstep[2]. When Ishmael returned home, he asked her wife whether someone had visited them, and she told him what had happened and repeated the message the old man had left him. Ishmael told her that the visitor was his father and that he had ordered him to retain his wife.

It was a long time later that Abraham visited Ishmael when the latter was sitting under a tree sharpening an arrow near Zamzam. When Ishmael saw him, he stood up and give him the due respect that a son should show his father. Abraham then told Ishmael that Allah had ordered him to do something specific. Ishmael said, 'Then fulfill what Allah had ordered you!' Abraham asked, 'Will you give me hand in this?' 'Yes, of course,' answered Ishmael. Abraham, pointing to a mound and its surroundings, said, 'Allah has ordered me to built a house in this place.' They then erected a building on the foundations of

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[2] To establish one's footstep is an Arabic expression figuratively used to mean stay with one's wife.

the Sacred House. Ishmael was in charge of procuring rocks, and Abraham built the House. When the building became high above the surface of the earth, they used a rock as a step on which Abraham stood and Ishmael handed him rocks. During this process they repeated the following words, " ***'Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.'*** " (Al Baqarah: 127) They went on building each side of the House while still repeating the very same words.

Ibn Katheer states: This *Hadith* is expressed in the words of Ibn `Abbaas. Some of it seems strange. It seems that he referred to the Israelite narratives. They have totally excluded the story of Allah's commanding Abraham to slaughter Ishmael. Ibn `Abbaas mentions that Abraham visited his son thrice only, the first of which was after the death of Hajar and the marriage of Ishmael. This means that he never visited Ishmael since he was a baby until his marriage, despite the fact that long distances were cut short for Abraham that he did not feel the suffering of journeys. It was also said that Abraham rode the Buraq when he wanted to visit Ishmael and his mother. How could he then abstain from checking their conditions all that time though they needed him most?!

The Story of the Sacrifice of Ishmael:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"He said: 'I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! O my Lord! Grant me a righteous (son)!' So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: 'O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: 'O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills, one practicing Patience and Constancy!' So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate***

on his forehead (for sacrifice), we called out to him, 'O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!' thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: 'Peace and salutation to Abraham!' Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For he was one of Our believing Servants. And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a Prophet - one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls." (Al Saaffaat: 99-113)

Ibn Katheer states: We have mentioned that when Abraham migrated from the land of his people, he asked Allah to grant him a righteous son. Thus Allah gave him the good news of a son who would be ready to suffer and endure hardships. The son was Ishmael, as he was the first child born to Abraham. All divine laws agree on this point. Abraham was then 86 years old.

Allah says: ***"Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him,"*** Abraham dreamed that he was ordered to slaughter his son. In a *Hadith* narrated by Ibn `Abbaas, *"Prophets' dreams are inspirations."* This was another situation in which Abraham was tested. At first, Abraham was ordered to leave his wife and his sole son Ishmael in a barren uninhabited land and he complied with the divine commandment, putting his whole trust in Allah and depending on Him. Allah then relieved the distress of the mother and her child and provided them with sustenance from sources that never crossed their minds. Next Allah ordered Abraham to slaughter his sole son, who was born after Abraham grew old. However, Abraham obeyed Allah's commandment and hastened to fulfill it. Abraham then discussed the matter with Ishmael to

alleviate his psychological stress, instead of fulfilling the commandment by force. Allah recounts the story as such: " ***'O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: now see what is thy view!'*** " The son immediately and without hesitation said, " ***'O my father! do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills, one practicing Patience and Constancy!'*** " (Al Saaffaat: 102) This answer shows how obedient and well-behaved the son was to his Lord and his father. ***"So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice)"*** (Al Saaffaat: 103) Ibn `Abbaas mentions that Abraham prostrated his son on his forehead to avoid seeing his face while slaughtering him. As-Suddyy states, When Abraham passed the knife on Ishmael's throat, it did not cut. It was said that a brass circle surrounded his throat which prevented the knife from touching it. Ibn Katheer maintains: At this moment Allah called Abraham saying, ***"O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!,"*** meaning that the purpose of the dream has already been fulfilled, i.e. your submission to the Will of Allah and your obedience to Him. ***"And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice."*** This mentioned sacrifice was to spare the life of the son. According to the view of the majority of scholars, the sacrifice was a white ram with sound eyes and horns, which Abraham found tied to a thorny plant in Mount Thabir in Makkah. Ibn `Abbaas states that this ram had pastured for forty years in Paradise, before it was sacrificed 'in Mina', according to the report of Mujahid, or 'in the Station of Abraham' according to the report of `Ubaid Ibn `Umair. Ibn `Abbaas states that the head of the ram was still hung on the Ka`bah dry.

Ibn Katheer argues that this proves that the sacrificed son was Ishmael because he lived in Makkah, not Isaac as the Jews claim, since Isaac was not reported to have visited

Makkah when he was young. This is obvious in the Qur'anic context, which tells the story of giving Abraham the good news of his son Isaac after mentioning the story of the sacrifice. The best proof of this is that deduced by Muhammad Ibn Ka`b Al-Qardhi. He comments on the Qur'anic verse, ***"We gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob,"*** (Hood: 71) saying how can Abraham be given the glad tiding that Isaac will be the father of Jacob, then be ordered to sacrifice Isaac when he was young before giving birth to Jacob?! This contradicts the aforementioned glad tidings. Yet, Allah knows best. Ibn Jareer states that Ibn `Abbaas points: The sacrificed son is Ishmael. The Jews claim that the sacrificed son was Isaac, but they are liars.

According to Ibn Katheer, the allegation put forward by the Jews that the sacrificed son was Isaac was prompted by their jealousy of the Arabs. This is because Ishmael is the father of the Arabs who inhabited Hijar, to whom Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, belonged. Isaac, on the other hand, was the father of Jacob or Israel from whom descended the Jews. They thus wanted to privilege themselves with this honor, which in turn led them to impair Allah's words and add to them. They were a people of evil nature who did not acknowledge the fact that all bounties are in the hands of Allah and that He grants them to whomever He pleases.

The Birth of Isaac:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a Prophet - one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls."*** (Al Saaffaat: 112-3)

Ibn Katheer maintains: The good news of Isaac was

carried to Abraham and Sarah by the angels when they were on their way to devastate the towns of Sodom, as will be explained shortly.

Allah says: *"There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, 'Peace!' He answered, 'Peace!' and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf. But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal), he felt some mistrust of them, and conceived a fear of them. They said: 'Fear not: we have been sent against the people of Loot.' And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed: but We gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob. She said: 'Alas for me! shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!' They said: 'Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O ye people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!' "* (Hood: 70-3)

Allah also says: *"Has the story reached thee, of the honored guests of Abraham? Behold, they entered his presence, and said: 'Peace!' He said, 'Peace!" (and thought, 'These seem) unusual people.' Then he turned quickly to his household, brought out a fatted calf, and placed it before them He said, 'will ye not eat?" (When they did not eat). He conceived a fear of them. They said, 'Fear not,' and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge. But his wife came forward (laughing) aloud: she smote her forehead and said: 'A barren old woman!' They said, 'Even so has thy* **Lord spoken: and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge."** (Al Dhaariyaat: 24-30)

It was reported that the angels that entered before Abraham were three: Gabriel, Michael and Israfil. He thought

they were guests and treated them as ones. He roasted a fatted calf. Allah says: ***"But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal),"*** They showed no wish to eat at all. ***"He felt some mistrust of them, and conceived a fear of them. They said: 'Fear not: we have been sent against the people of Loot."*** (Hood: 70) meaning that they were sent to the people of Lot to devastate their towns. On hearing this Sarah rejoiced that Allah would punish the disbelievers. She was serving the guests, as was the custom among Arabs and others. ***"We gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob."*** (Hood: 71) The angles fulfilled that task. ***"She said: 'Alas for me! shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man?' "*** Neither me nor my husband is expected to be fit for that. Besides, I am barren and far too old now to give birth to a child. ***" 'That would indeed be a wonderful thing!' "*** (Hood:72) In another verse Allah says: ***"But his wife came forward (laughing) aloud: she smote her forehead,"*** as women usually do to express wonder, ***"and said: 'A barren old woman!'"*** (Al Dhaariyaat: 29) The angels answered her saying, ***" 'Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O ye people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!' "*** (Hood: 73) Abraham was also amazed and overjoyed with such good news and in attempt to confirm that, he said, ***"Do you give me glad tidings that old age has seized me? Of what then is your good news?' They said: 'We give thee glad tidings in truth: be not then in despair!' "*** (Al Hijr: 54-5)

The Construction of the Sacred House:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): 'Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate***

themselves (therein in prayer). And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men; they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.' " (Al Hajj: 26-7)

Allah also says: *"The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka; full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings: In it are Signs manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures."*(Aali `Imraan: 96-7)

Allah further says: *"And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: he said: 'I will make thee an Imam to the Nations.' He pleaded: 'And also (Imams) from my offspring!' He answered: 'But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers.' Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and We covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il, that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in Prayer). And remember Abraham said: 'My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its People with fruits' such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day.' He said: '(Yea), and such as reject Faith, for a while will I grant them their Pleasure, but will soon drive them to the torment of Fire, an evil destination (indeed)!' And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer): 'Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. 'Our Lord! Make of us Muslims bowing to Thy (Will); and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (Will); and show us our places for the*

celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them: for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise.' " (Al Baqarah: 124-9)

Some of the righteous ancestors maintain: in every heaven there is a house wherein the inhabitants of such heaven adore Allah. It (such house) is held as the Ka`bah is held by people on earth. Ibn Katheer states: Allah commanded Abraham to construct a House for Him on earth to resemble such houses of worship made for the angels in heaven. Allah guided Abraham to the exact location of the House which has been specified since Allah created heavens and earth. According to an authentic narration in the two authentic books of *Hadith*, Makkah is the town which Allah has declared sacred since He created heavens and earth. It will remain sacred until the Day of Resurrection. The Ka`bah is located parallel to the Much-Frequented Fane, which is regarded as the Ka`bah of the dwellers of the seventh heaven, in a way that if it were to fall down, it will fall on the Ka`bah of the earth. Houses of worship in other heavens are similarly located.

Allah the Almighty says: ***"The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka; full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings."*** (Aali `Imraan: 96) The first place of worship appointed for men to seek blessings and guidance therefrom was the House located at Bakka or Makkah. It was also said that it was founded on the current location of the Ka`bah. ***"In it are Sings manifest,"*** which indicates that it was the construction of Abraham, the father of all Prophets, who will all follow his tradition and abide by it thereafter. ***"The Station of Abraham,"*** the rock on which he stood when the building rose higher than his stature. The

footprints of Abraham remained on that rock until the early days of Islam. It was hung on the wall of the Ka`bah, as it has ever used to be, until Caliph `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab Placed it a short distance away from the Ka`bah so that the pilgrims who performed prayer there might not be distracted by those who circumambulated the Ka`bah.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And remember Abraham and Isma`il raised the foundations of the House,"*** (with this prayer): ***"Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."*** (Al Baqarah: 127) They are in complete devotion and obedience to Allah, asking Him to accept their praiseworthy endeavor. ***"Our Lord! Make of us Muslims bowing to Thy (Will); and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (Will); and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."*** (Al Baqarah: 128) For a long time the Ka`bah did not change since it was first built by Abraham. The tribe of Quraish then rebuilt it, having the northern side which faces the direction of Syria, shorter than the way it was originally built by Abraham. It has remained so until the present day.

In the two *Saheehs* of Moslem and Al-Bukhari, it is mentioned on the authority of `Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, told her, *"Do you not see that when your people rebuilt the Ka`bah, they did not abide by the foundations set by Abraham?" She replied, "O Messenger of Allah! Why don't you return it to the foundations of Abraham?" He said, "Were your people not still near to the period of disbelief, (in another version: Were your people not still near to the period of Ignorance,) I would have spent the treasure of the Ka`bah in the cause of Allah, and made its gate next to the earth and annexed the Rock to it."*

Ibn Katheer says: `Abdullaah Ibn Al-Zubair, may Allah forgive him, then rebuilt it as his aunt, the Mother of the Believers, `Aa'ishah told him, which was in accordance with what the Prophet had wished. When Al-Hajjaj killed `Abdullaah in 73 A.H., he wrote to the Caliph `Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan. They thought that the modifications of the structure of the Ka`bah that `Abdullaah introduced were made after his own desires. Thus, the caliph ordered that the structure of the Ka`bah to be returned to its previous state. Thus, a hole was made in the wall facing the direction of Syria, the Rock was brought out of the Ka`bah, the wall was then blocked again, the interior of the Ka`bah was filled with rocks, which caused the rise of the eastern gate, while the western gate was totally blocked. When they knew that `Abdullaah 's modifications were made according to what `Aa'ishah had told him after the Prophet, they regretted it and wished they had not changed what he had done.

During the reign of Al-Mahdi, son of Al-Mansur, he consulted Imam Malik on the issue of modifying the Ka`bah the way it was modified by `Abdullaah Ibn Al-Zubair. But Imam Malik did not commend that idea for fear that the kings might set the Ka`bah as a target for their personal tendencies and introduce modifications to its structure every now and then. It was thus agreed that it would remain the way we see it nowadays.

Allah says: ***"And remember Abraham said: 'My Lord, make this a City of Peace, and feed its People with fruits"*** (Al Baqarah: 126) When Abraham, the Close One, built the most revered mosque (the Ka`bah) in the most honored place (Makkah) in an arid valley, he prayed to Allah to bestow blessings on its inhabitants and provide them with fruits, despite the scarcity of water and the absence of trees, plants and fruits. He further prayed to Allah to set this place a secure sanctuary.

Allah accepted his supplication and granted him what he had asked. Allah says: ***"Do they not then see that We have made a Sanctuary secure, and that men are being snatched away from all around them."*** (Al `Ankaboot: 67)

Allah also says: ***"Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary, to which are brought as tribute fruits of all kinds, a provision from Ourselves?"*** (Al Qasas: 57) Abraham also asked Allah to send a messenger to the people of Makkah from among themselves who speak their tongue, thus granting them the opportunity to enjoy prosperity in this world and in the Hereafter. He says: ***"Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them: for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."*** (Al Baqarah: 129) This invocation was also accepted by Allah and He sent to them Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the sealing Prophet and messenger, and gave him a law as perfect as no other previous law ever was. He was to address the entire globe, including people of different races, languages and characteristics.

Due to the praiseworthy efforts exerted by Abraham in erecting the Ka`bah for the people of the earth, he deserved to be granted a distinguished status in the Much-Frequented Fane, the Ka`bah of the inhabitants of the seventh heaven. It is the blessed House, in which seventy thousand angels enter each day to worship Allah and never come out until the Day of Resurrection.

The Issue of Giving Life to the Dead:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Behold! Abraham said: 'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He said: 'Dost thou not then believe?' He said: 'Yea! But to***

satisfy my own understanding.' He said: 'Take four birds; tame them to turn to thee; put a portion of them on every hill, and call to them; they will come to thee, (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise." (Al Baqarah: 260)

According to Ibn Katheer, exegetes mention many reasons for the question of Abraham. Some maintain that when Abraham said to Nimrod, ***" 'My Lord is He Who giveth life and death,' "*** (Al Baqarah: 258) he wished to reach a degree of certainty of sight after he had already attained the certainty of heart. Abraham wished to witness with his very eyes the process of giving life to the dead, since seeing with one's eyes is usually far more convincing and assuring than deduction.

As for the *Hadith* narrated by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"We are more rightful to doubt than Abraham when he said,* ***'My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead.' He said: 'Dost thou not then believe?' He said: 'Yea! But to satisfy my own understanding' "*** Abu Ibrahim Al-Mazni comments on this *Hadith* saying, the doubt of Abraham and Muhammad, peace be upon them, was regarding whether their question would be answered by Allah or not. It had nothing to do with Allah's power to give life to the dead.

The result was that Allah answered Abraham's question. He ordered him to bring four types of birds, shred their flesh, tear off their feathers, mix them all up, then divide them into four portions and put each on a hill. When Abraham did so, Allah ordered him to call the birds by the permission of their Lord. Each part of body of the birds and each single feather assembled with its other related parts and feathers until the bodies of the four birds were whole again. The birds then

neared him so as to be seen easily. It was also said that Abraham was ordered to retain the heads of the four birds in his hand. When each bird came to him, he threw each head separately and it was attached to its relevant bird.

Abraham Was Neither a Jew Nor a Christian:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Ye People of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding? Ah! Ye are those who fell to disputing (even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge! But why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge? It is Allah Who knows, and ye who know not! Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah. Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Prophet and those who believe: and Allah is the Protector of those who have Faith."*** (Aali `Imraan: 65-8)

Ibn Katheer maintains: Allah refuted the claims put forward by the Jews and the Christians that Abraham followed their dogma. Allah held him far and above all such claims and showed how ignorant and mindless they were. Allah says, ***"when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him"*** How then can either party claim that Abraham followed their law, when their laws were legislated long after him?! For this reason Allah rebuked them saying, ***"Have ye no understanding?"*** (Aali `Imraan: 65) The verses go on: ***"Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah."*** (Aali `Imraan: 67) This shows clearly that Abraham embraced Islam, which contradicts the

corrupted beliefs of the Jews, Christians and polytheists.

Allah further says: *"And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose and rendered pure in this world: and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the Righteous. Behold! His Lord said to him: 'Bow (thy will to Me):' he said: 'I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe.' And this was the Legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; 'O my sons! Allah hath chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the state of submission (to Allah).' Were ye witnesses when Death appeared before Jacob? Behold he said to his sons: 'What will ye worship after me?' They said: 'We shall worship thy God and the God of thy fathers, - of Abraham, Isma'il and* Isaac, *- the One (True) God: to Him we bow (in Islam).' That was a People that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case! They say: 'Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (to salvation).' Say thou: 'Nay! (I would rather) the Religion of Abraham, the True, and he joined not gods with Allah.' Say ye: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il,* Isaac, *Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: and we bow to Allah (in Islam).' So if they believe as ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism; but Allah will suffice thee as against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (Our religion is) the Baptism of Allah: and who can baptize better than Allah? And it is He Whom we worship.* Say: *Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and that we are sincere (in our faith) in Him? Or do ye*

say that Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do ye know better than Allah? Ah! Who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah? But Allah is not unmindful of what ye do! That was a people that hath passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did and ye of what ye do! Of their merits there is no question in your case." (Al Baqarah: 130-41)

Allah asserts that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, nor even a polytheist. Rather he was a pure follower of Islam. For this very reason, Allah says: ***"Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him,"*** (Aali `Imraan: 68) those who followed his creed of his contemporaries and those who came after him. ***"as are also this Prophet,"*** meaning Prophet Muhammad, since Allah revealed unto him Islam which He did unto Abraham and perfected it and bestowed on him bounties unattained by any of the previous Prophets and messengers.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Say: 'Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a Way that is straight, a religion of right, the Path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah.' Say: 'Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds; no partner hath He: this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His Will.' "*** (Al An`aam: 161-63)

Allah also says: ***"Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in faith, and he joined not gods with Allah. He showed his gratitude for the favors of Allah, Who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way. And We gave him Good in this world, and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the Righteous. So We have taught thee***

the inspired (message), 'Follow the ways of Abraham the True in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah." (Al Nahl: 120-23)

Al-Bukhari mentions on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that when the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, saw drawings on the walls of the House (i.e. the interior walls of the Ka`bah) at the Conquest of Makkah, he refused to enter until the drawings were wiped out. He saw pictures of Abraham and Ishmael with divination arrows in their hands. He said, *"Allah's curse be on them! (i.e. on those who drew such figures) By Allah, they (Abraham and Ishmael) never practiced divination with arrows."* In another version the wording goes as follows, *"Allah's curse be on them! They knew well that our old man (Abraham) never practiced divination with arrows."*

Allah's Commendation of Abraham:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: he said: 'I will make thee an Imam to the Nations.' He pleaded: 'And also (Imams) from my offspring!' He answered: 'But My Promise is not within the reach of evil-doers."*** (Al Baqarah: 124)

Ibn Katheer mentions: When Abraham fulfilled the commandment of his Lord, Allah appointed him an Imam whose example would be followed by all people. When he asked Allah to grant such Imamate to his progeny, Allah fulfilled his wish, but excluded from it the transgressors. Allah says, ***"And we gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation, and We granted him his reward in this life; and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the Righteous."*** (Al `Ankaboot: 27)

Allah also says: ***"We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all***

(three) We guided: and before him, We guided Noah, and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron: thus do We reward those who do good: and Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the Righteous: and Isma'il and Elisha, and Jonah, and Loot: and to all We gave favor above the nations: (to them) and to their fathers, and progeny and brethren: We chose them, and We guided them to a straight Way." (Al An`aam: 85-7)

Allah further say: ***"And We sent Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation: and some of them were on right guidance, but many of them became rebellious transgressors."*** (Al Hadeed: 26) All Prophets unto whom divine books were revealed after Abraham were in fact his descendants. This is a distinguished status unattained by any other man. Two great Prophets; Ishmael and Isaac descended from Abraham, the mother of the former was Hajar and that of the latter was Sarah.

Jacob was then born to Isaac. He was known as Israel, to whom all the tribes belonged. Prophethood was then granted to the Children of Israel that numerous Prophets were sent to them. The chain of Prophets sent to them was then sealed by Jesus, son of Mary.

As for Ishmael, he was the father of the Arabs. The only Prophet in his progeny was Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It was reported in the two authentic books of Moslem and Al-Bukhari that Allah's Messenger said, *"I will be in a station in which all people will seek me even Abraham."*

Al-Bukhari states on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas who said: Allah's Messenger used to recite, *'a`udhu bikalimatil-lahit-tammah min kulli shaitanin wa hammah wa min kulli `ainin lammah* (I seek protection with Allah's perfect Words

from all devils and creeping creatures and from every evil eye.)

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in faith, and he joined not gods with Allah. He showed his gratitude for the favors of Allah,"*** giving thanks to Allah with all his body parts, and his deeds all expressed gratitude to Allah, ***"Who chose him,"*** (Al Nahl: 120-1) to receive His message and appointed him as His Close One and granted him both the good of the worldly life and the Hereafter.

Allah says: ***"Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend."*** (Al Nisaa': 125) Here Allah invites people to follow Abraham as he propagated the sound religion and the straightforward way. He fulfilled all the commandments of Allah. Allah praised him in another verse saying, ***"And of Abraham who fulfilled his engagements,"*** (Al Najm: 37) For this reason Allah held him as his favorite (Arabic *khalil*, a word which denotes extreme love). This distinguished status was also attained by Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. It was reported in the two authentic books of Moslem and Al-Bukhari on the authority of Ibn Mas`ood that the Prophet said: *"O people! Allah has taken me as His favorite."*

Allah has mentioned Abraham more than once in the Glorious Qur'an with praise. It was said that he was mentioned 35 times in the Glorious Qur'an, 15 times of which are found in *Surah,* "Al-Baqarah" (2). Abraham was one of the five Messengers of Firm Will, whose names were specifically mentioned in *Surah,* "Al Ahzaab" (33) and Al Taubah (9). The verses are as follows: ***"And remember We took from the Prophets their Covenant: as (We did) from thee: from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from***

them a solemn Covenant" (Al Ahzaab: 7) ***"The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - that which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him)."*** (Al Shura: 13) Abraham ranked the second among the Messengers of Firm Will after Muhammad.

Al-Bukhari mentions on the authority of Abu Hurairah who said, *"It was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah! Who is the noblest of all people?' He replied, 'The one who fears Allah the most.' They said, 'We do not ask you about that.' He said, 'It is then Joseph [Yoosuf] Prophet of Allah, son of the Prophet of Allah, son of the Prophet of Allah, son of Allah's Favorite (Abraham).' They said, 'We did not intend that.' He said, 'You then ask about the descents of the Arabs? The best of them before conversion to Islam are the best of them after embracing Islam."*

As Abraham ranked the second among the Messengers of Firm Will after Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, a Muslim worshipper is ordered to recite in the *Tashahhud* (the words that a Muslim recites in the middle and at the end of each prayer) what was mentioned in the authentic Prophetic *Hadith* narrated by Ka`b Ibn `Ujrah and others. Ka`b reports, "We said, 'O Messenger of Allah! As for reciting peace upon you, we know this well. What about praying that you be blessed?' He answered, *'You should say, 'Allahmma salli `ala Muhammadin wa `ala aali Muhammadin kama sallaita `ala Ibrahim wa aali Ibrahim wa barik `ala Muhammadin wa `ala aali Muhammadin kama barakta `ala*

Ibrahima wa aali Ibrahim, innaka hamidun majid (O Allah! Shower your blessings upon Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You did upon Abraham and the family of Abraham, and grant favors to Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as you did to Abraham and the people of Abraham. Indeed You are the Praiseworthy and Gracious.)'

`Abdul-Razzaaq mentions on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that he comments on the verse, ***"And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled,"*** (Al Baqarah: 124) saying that Allah enjoined purification on Abraham. Five types of purification were enjoined: five relating to the head and five to the remaining parts of the body. The five relating to the head are: trimming the moustache closely, rinsing the mouth with water, using tooth stick [*siwak*], sniffing water up in the nostrils and combing the hair of the head and beautifying it. The five relating to the body are: clipping nails, shaving the pubes, getting circumcised, plucking out the armpit hair, and cleaning the excretory organs with water (after answering the call of nature.)

It was related in Imam Moslem's *Saheeh* and in the *Sunan* on the authority of `Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Ten are the acts of natural disposition: Trimming the moustache closely, letting the beard grow, using a tooth stick, sniffing water up in the nostrils, clipping nails, washing knuckles, plucking out the armpit hair, shaving the pubes and cleaning the excretory organs with water (after answering the call of nature.)"*

This means that Abraham's devotion to Allah and his submissiveness in worship did not contradict with his caring for his body. All these are included in the verse, ***"And of Abraham***

who fulfilled his engagements" (Al Najm: 37)

The Death of Abraham:

The People of the Book report that Sarah died in Hebron, in the land of Can`an at the age of 127. Abraham grieved for her death. He then buried her in a cave which he bought there. Shortly afterwards, he fell ill and died at the age of 175 or 190. Ibn Katheer states, there is evidence that Abraham lived for 200 years. Abu Haatim Ibn Hibbaan mentions in his *Saheeh* on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Abraham was circumcised at the age of 120. He then lived for eighty years. He was circumcised in (the town of) Qadum."* Ibn Katheer maintains: According to what is related in Al-Bukhari's *Saheeh*, Abraham was circumcised at the age of eighty, but it is not mentioned how many years he lived thereafter.

THE STORY OF PROPHET LOT (LOOṯ), PEACE BE UPON HIM

His Call:

His name is Lot, son of Haran, son of Tariẖ. Lot was the nephew of Prophet Abraham, as mentioned by Ibn Katheer. He left Abraham and went to Sodom. Its people were notorious atheists and highwaymen. They were the first community in all mankind to practice sodomy; the most detestable of all crimes. They used to commit such vicious sin in public. Prophet Lot called on them to believe in the oneness of Allah, worship Him alone and abandon the hideous crime they committed. Yet, they persisted in sin and went astray disobeying their Prophet. Allah overtook them with an unprecedented penalty so that they would be an example for other hardened disbelievers.

The denial of his people and their persistence in disbelief:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"We also (sent) Looṯ: he said to his people: 'Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practise your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds."*** (Al A`raaf: 80-1)

Ibn Katheer mentions: When Lot called on them to embrace Islam, worship Allah and abandon the vicious sin which they were drowned in, not even a single man from among them responded to his call. They did not abandon their crime, and even planned to drive Lot out of the city. Allah says: ***"And his people gave no answer but this: they said, "Drive them out of your city: these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!"*** (Al A`raaf: 82)

In addition to the heinous crime of sodomy, the people of Lot committed highway robbery, breached oaths and their gatherings always involved obscene language and actions. They were never ashamed of practicing sodomy in public. They stooped to the level of brainless beasts, or even lower.

Sending Angels to Them:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And (remember) Loot: behold, he said to his people: 'Ye do commit lewdness, such as no people in Creation (ever) committed before you. Do ye indeed approach men, and cut off the highway? And practise wickedness (even) in your councils?' But his people gave no answer but this: they said: 'Bring us the Wrath of Allah if thou tellest the truth.' He said: 'O my Lord! Help Thou me against people who do mischief!"*** (Al `Ankaboot: 28-30)

When the people of Lot obstinately dared him to bring about the torture that, as mentioned by Ibn Katheer, he had warned them of, he invoked Allah against them and asked Him to enable him to overpower these mischievous people. Allah answered his invocation and sent his honored angels who passed by Abraham and informed him that he would father a knowledgeable son. They also told him about the momentous mission they were going to carry out in Sodom.

Allah the Almighty says: ***"(Abraham) said: 'And what, O ye Messengers, is your errand (now)?' They said, 'We have been sent to a people (deep) in sin; to bring on, on them, (a shower of) stones of clay (brimstone), marked as from thy Lord for those who trespass beyond bounds."*** (Al Dhaariyaat: 31-4) Allah also says: ***"When Our Messengers came to Abraham with the good news, they said: 'We are indeed going to destroy the people of this township: for truly they are***

(addicted to) crime.' He said: 'But there is Loot there.' They said: 'Well do we know who is there: we will certainly save him and his following, except his wife: she is of those who lag behind!" (Al `Ankaboot: 31-2) Allah further says: ***"When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him, he began to plead with Us for Loot 's people."*** (Hood: 74) Abraham wished that the people of Lot would repent, embrace the right religion and abandon the sin they indulged in. Thus, Allah says: ***"For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look of Allah. O Abraham! Seek not this. The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth: for them there cometh a Penalty that cannot be turned back!"*** (Hood: 75-6) The die is cast. O Abraham, you should not talk in this manner. The matter was all ordained by Allah. His severe penalty will be inflicted on those hardened sinners.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: "***When our Messengers came to Loot, he was grieved on their account and felt himself powerless (to protect) them. He said: 'This is a distressful day.'***" (Hood: 77) Exegetes explain: When the angles, who were Gabriel, Michael and Israfil, left Abraham, they went to Sodom in the form of handsome youths as a test from Allah to its people. They asked Lot to receive them as guests. He feared that anyone else of the people of Sodom might receive them if he declined, as he thought that they were human beings.

As-Suddyy comments: When the Angels reached the river of Sodom, they found Lot's daughter there. She was fetching water for her family. The angels, disguised in the form of men, asked her if there was anybody there to host them. She told them to stay where they were until she came back. She was afraid that the people of her city might seduce them. She returned home and told her father about the guests. Lot's people

forbade him to host the handsome visitors. Lot went out and returned with the angels. Nobody knew about the guests except his family. His wife went out and told the people of the city that Lot had hosted some of the most handsome men ever.

Ibn Katheer maintains: The people of Lot hurried to him, as Allah says: ***"The inhabitants of the City came in (mad) joy (at news of the young men). Loot said: 'These are my guests: disgrace me not: But fear Allah and shame me not.' They said: 'Did we not forbid thee (to speak) for all and sundry?' He said: 'There are my daughters (to marry), if ye must act (so)."*** (Al Hijr: 67-71) Allah also says: ***"And his people came rushing towards him, and they had been long in the habit of practicing abominations,"*** in addition to their previous great sin. Lot answered them saying: ***"O my people! Here are my daughters: they are purer for you (if ye marry)!"*** (Hood: 78) He advised them to follow the lawful way of satisfying their desires through intercourse with their women, whom Lot thought of as daughters, since the Prophet of a people is the father of such people. Allah says: ***"The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers."*** (Al Ahzaab: 6) Allah quotes his Prophet Lot' saying: ***" 'Of all the creatures in the world, will ye approach males, and leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your mates? Nay, ye are a people transgressing (all limits)!' "*** (Al Shu'araa': 166)

Lot then told his people: ***"Now fear Allah, and cover me not with shame about my guests! Is there not among you a single right-minded man?"*** (Hood: 78) The verse forbids his people to commit sodomy and involves a testimony that there was not a single prudent man among the people of Lot. His people answered: ***"Well dost thou know we have no need of thy daughters: indeed thou knowest quite well what we want!***

80- He said: Would that I had power to suppress you or that I could betake myself to some powerful support." (Hood: 79-80) Exegetes state that Lot stood behind the closed door of his house and kept arguing with his people hoping to dissuade them from what they intended to do, while they tried to open the door and get in. When things got even worse, he said the above words. Thus Allah, taking an oath by the life of his Prophet Muhammad, describes their state saying: *"Verily, by thy life (O Prophet), in their wild intoxication, they wander in distraction, to and fro."* (Al Hijr: 72)

Torture Befalls the Disbelievers:

Allah, Exalted be He, say: *"And (Loot) did warn them of Our Punishment, but they disputed about the Warning. And they even sought to snatch away his guests from him, but We blinded their eyes. (They heard:) 'Now taste ye My Wrath and My Warning.' Early on the morrow an abiding Punishment seized them."* (Al Qamar: 36-8)

Ibn Katheer states: It was said that Gabriel went to the disbelievers among the people of Lot and stroke their faces with his wing until their eyes were wiped out as if there were never eyes in their faces. They walked trembling, trying to feel their way around and threatening that the next day they would do the worst with Lot. Allah says: *"(The Messengers) said: 'O Loot! We are Messengers from thy Lord! By no means shall they reach thee! Now travel with thy family while yet a part of the night remains, and let not any of you look back: but thy wife (will remain behind): to her will happen what happens to the people. Morning is their time appointed: is not the morning nigh?'* "(Hood: 81) The angels ordered Lot to get out of the town at night along with his family and not to look back upon hearing the sound of torture which was going to overtake his

people. Lot was also ordered to walk behind his family not in front of them. ***"But thy wife"*** is an exception that gives two possible meanings:

a. it may mean that all the family of Lot was to get out of the town except his wife who was to stay behind and be tortured with the rest of people, or

b. it may also mean that Lot's wife walked with them but turned behind and was then tortured. The first meaning is more likely to be true. Allah knows best.

The angels said to Lot: ***"Morning is their time appointed: is not the morning nigh?"*** (Hood: 81) The angels delivered to Lot the glad tidings that those people would be exterminated by daybreak. Lot and his two daughters went out and it is said that his wife accompanied them. Nobody from the city followed the Lot family. When they got out of the city and the sun rose, the people of Sodom were overtaken by unprecedented penalty. Allah inflicted on them the most grievous and the severest punishment which was indeed inescapable. Allah says: ***"When Our decree issued, We turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay, spread, layer on layer. Marked as from thy Lord: nor are they ever far from those who do wrong!"*** (Hood: 82-3) It is said that Gabriel plucked out the seven cities of the people of Lot with all their people, animals, places and buildings, then turned the cities upside down and then Allah ***"rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay, spread, layer on layer."*** Very thick brimstones were poured on them just like heavy rain. On each brimstone was written the name of the person who was to be hit with it as Allah says: ***"Marked as from thy Lord for those who trespass beyond bounds."*** (Hood: 83)

Regarding the story of Lot, Allah says: ***"Nor are they ever far from those who do wrong!"*** (Hood: 83) This means that such penalty could be inflicted on those who commit the very same sin of Lot's people; sodomy. Hence, many Muslim scholars state that whoever commits such sin must be stoned to death, be he married or not. Prophet Muhammad also said, *"If you find anybody committing the very same sin of the people of Lot, kill both parties (to such sin)."*

It is said that the wife of Lot stayed with her people, but other scholars maintain that she went out with her family. Yet, when she heard the cries of her people, she looked back disobeying the command of her Lord. When she said: "O my people", a brimstone fell on her and she was punished just like the rest of her people. She followed her people as regards their abominable crime and had her eye on the guests of her husband Lot as Allah says: ***"Allah sets forth, for an example to the Unbelievers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Loot: they were (respectively) under two of our righteous servants, but they were false to their (husbands), and they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but were told: 'Enter ye the Fire along with (others) that enter!' "*** (Al Tahreem: 10) The phrase ***"were false to their (husbands)"*** means that they did not follow their husbands' religion. It does not mean that these wives committed adultery. Allah never lets a Prophet's wife commit such crime.

In place of the cities of Lot, there came to exist a useless stinking lake (the present Dead Sea). Even its shores are hardly exploited. Thus, Allah made the cities of Lot an example of the severe penalty which Allah may inflict on whoever disobeys Him and does not follow His Messengers. It is also a sign of the Omnipotence of Allah and His mercy endowed on the believers by saving them from such penalty and guiding them to

His righteous path, as He says: ***"Verily, in this is a Sign; but most of them do not believe. And verily, thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful."*** (Al Shu'araa': 8-9) He also says: ***"But the (mighty) Blast overtook them before morning, And We turned (the Cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay. Behold! in this are Signs for those who by tokens do understand."*** (Al Hijr: 73-5)

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And the (Cities were) right on the high-road."*** (Al Hijr: 76) The lake which replaced these cities lied on a route frequently crossed by travelers so that they may be warned against the wrath of Allah if they disobeyed Him, as Allah says: ***"Verily, ye pass by their (sites) by day, And by night: will ye not understand?"*** (Al Saaffaat: 137-8) He also says: ***"And We have left thereof an evident Sign, for any people who (care to) understand."*** (Al `Ankaboot: 35) Allah further says: ***"Then we evacuated those of the Believers who were there, But We found not there any just (Muslim) persons except in one house: And We left there a Sign for such as fear the Grievous Penalty."*** (Al Dhaariyaat: 35-7) This is an example and a proof of the Omnipotence of Allah and that whoever disobeys Him will be exposed to such grievous penalty.

THE STORY OF PROPHET JETHRO (SHU`AIB), PEACE BE UPON HIM

His Call:

The people of Madyan were Arabs who lived in the city of Madyan in ancient Syria, north of Hijaz, near the cities of the people of Lot. Their story occurred a short time after that of the people of Lot, as mentioned by Ibn Katheer. The people of Madyan were atheists who were most detestable highwaymen. They used to frighten and threaten whoever passed by their city. They even worshipped the wood and deserted worshipping Allah. As for their transactions, they never exacted just measure and weight, for they encroached on others' rights and never gave them their dues. Allah selected a Prophet from among this tribe. He was Prophet Jethro who called on them to worship Allah and abandon such vicious sins. Some of them believed in him, but the majority of the Madyan tribe rejected his call until they were overtaken by a severe penalty.

His People's Denial:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"To the Madyan people We sent Shu`aib, one of their own brethren: he said: 'O my people! Worship Allah; ye have no other god but Him. Now hath come unto you a Clear (Sign) from your Lord! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due; and do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order: that will be best for you, if ye have Faith.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 85)

Ibn Katheer maintains: Allah tells the story of Prophet Jethro when he called on his people to worship Allah alone and abandon His prohibitions, especially after a clear proof had

been given to them to support his call. This proof was represented in the so many miracles Jethro showed to his people in an attempt to convert them to the truth. These miracles are not mentioned in detail. Jethro told his people, ***"And squat not on every road, breathing threats, hindering from the path of Allah those who believe in Him, and seeking in it something crooked."*** (Al A`raaf: 86) The people of Jehro used to threaten passers-by and plunder their money. They were the first people to impose fees and tolls on people in return for passing through their city. They also used to threaten and persecute whoever believed in Allah and His Messenger. Prophet Jethro reminded them of the graces and favors endowed upon them by their Lord saying: ***"Remember how ye were little, and He gave you increase. And hold in your mind's eye what was the end of those who did mischief."*** (Al A`raaf: 86) In a similar verse, Allah says: ***"And give not short measure or weight: I see you in prosperity, but I fear for you the Penalty of a Day that will compass (you) all round."*** (Hood: 84) Prophet Jethro warned his people against persisting in such life of robbery and effecting injustice on people. If they insisted on this sort of life, Allah would deprive them of the bounty they already have and they would be poor, not to mention the punishment of the Hereafter which is far severer. Hence their Prophet warned them of the penalty of Allah whether in this life or in the Hereafter. Then he told them: ***"And O my people! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due: commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief. That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believed! but I am not set over you to keep watch!"*** (Hood: 85-6) Muslim scholars interpret the sentence ***"that which is left you by Allah is best for you"*** as a reference to the provisions bestowed upon them by Allah which were better than taking others' money as He said in another verse: ***"Say: 'Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good, even***

though the abundance of the bad may dazzle thee.' " (Al Maa'idah: 100) Honestly-gained money, even if not much, is better than ill-gotten money as it is not blessed, as Allah says: ***"Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity."*** (Al Baqarah: 276) Therefore, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Usurious money will decrease even if it is so much."* The Glorious Qur'an also warned against earning ill-gotten money, because it is not blessed. The following verse, ***"I am not set over you to keep watch"*** means that Jethro ordered his people to do so for the sake of Allah, not for his sake or the sake of others.

Yet, the people of Madyan replied: ***"O Shu`aib! Does thy (religion of) prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practiced, or that we leave off doing what we like with our property? Truly, thou art the one that forbeareth with faults and is right-minded!"*** (Hood: 87) This statement expresses their scoffing at their Prophet. Even so, their Prophet was very tolerant with them and spoke to them very leniently, as Allah says: ***"He said: 'O my people! See ye whether I have A Clear (Sign) from my Lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself? I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do. I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah. In Him I Trust, and unto Him I look."*** If Allah has provided me with a clear sign which indicates that I am telling the truth and He has selected me as His Messenger to you while you cannot realize that, what can I do? Jethro's saying ***"I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do,"*** means that whenever he ordered his people to do something, he was the first one to perform it and whenever he warned them against doing something, he was the first one to avoid it. He practiced what he preached, unlike late scholars of the children of Israel

whom Allah blamed in His Book saying: ***"Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practise it) yourselves. And yet ye study the Scripture? Will ye not understand?"*** (Al Baqarah: 44) Prophet Muhammad warned his nation against not practicing what they preach. Whoever does will be exposed to a harsh penalty on the Day of Judgment. This is the characteristic of the disbelievers who disobey their Prophets. Yet, righteous scholars always practice what they preach.

Prophet Jethro told them: ***"I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power; and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah. In Him I Trust, and unto Him I look."*** (Hood: 88) This means that Prophet Jethro only wanted to reform them and that he did his best in order to achieve such target. He put his trust in Allah so that He would guide him. Then, Prophet Jethro warned his people anew saying: ***"And O my people! let not my dissent (from you) cause you to sin, lest ye suffer a fate similar to that of the people of Noah or of Hood or of Saalih, nor are the people of Loot far off from you!"*** Jethro's phrase, ***"nor are the people of Loot far off from you!"*** means that the people of Lot were not far off his people as far as time and place were concerned. It may be said that Jethro's people were like Lot's people as regards committing vicious sins such as highway robbery, and plundering others' money whether secretly or in public. The three possible meanings were applicable for they were very close to them in time, place and in behavior. Jethro then said: ***"But ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn unto Him (in repentance): for my Lord is indeed full of mercy and Loving-Kindness."*** (Hood: 90) After warning his people of the wrath of Allah, Jethro here advises his people to abandon their sins and repent, for Allah is ***"indeed full of mercy and Loving-Kindness."*** Allah will accept the repentance and have mercy on whoever repents and reverts to Him, for Allah is the Most Merciful.

Then the people of Jethro said, ***"O Shu`aib! Much of what thou sayest we do not understand! In fact, among us we see that thou hast no strength! Were it not for thy family, we should certainly have stoned thee! For thou hast among us no great position!"*** (Hood: 91) This is an expression of defiance to their messenger as the polytheists of the Quraish tribe said to Prophet Muhammad, ***"Our hearts are under veils, (concealed) from that to which thou dost invite us, and in our ears is a deafness, and between us and thee is a screen: so do thou (what thou wilt); for us, we shall do (what we will!)"***(Fussilat: 5)

The people of Jethro even defied their messenger claiming that he is oppressed and left alone without companions. They even said that had it not been for Jethro's family, they would have killed him. Allah says: ***"He said: 'O my people! is then my family of more consideration with you than Allah? For ye cast Him away behind your backs (with contempt). But verily my Lord encompasseth on all sides all that ye do!' "*** (Hood: 92) Jethro blamed them for taking his family into consideration while ignoring the teachings of Allah which they rejected completely. Jethro warned them that Allah knows all this and that He will punish them for their rejection of the faith and for all the ugly deeds they committed. Then he threatened them saying, ***"And O my people! do whatever ye can: I will do (my part): soon will ye know who it is on whom descends the Penalty of ignominy, and who is a liar! and watch ye! for I too am watching with you!"*** (Hood: 93) This statement is similar to Jethro's words, ***"And if there is a party among you who believes in the Message with which I have been sent, and a party which does not believe, hold yourselves in patience until Allah doth decide between us: for He is the best to decide."*** (Al A`raaf: 87)

Torture Befalls the Disbelievers:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said, 'O Shu`aib! We shall certainly drive thee out of our city - (thee) and those who believe with thee - or else ye (thou and they) shall have to return to our ways and religion.' He said, 'What! Even though we do detest (them)?"*** (Al A`raaf: 88)

Ibn Katheer says: They asked those who believed in Jethro's mission to revert once again to the religion of their people and desert the religion of Jethro. Jethro argued with them saying that his followers would not desert his religion voluntarily, but they would be under coercion, because a true believer would never reject his faith after he had tasted the sweetness of belief. Therefore, Jethro told his people that Allah would never fail His worshippers. Then, Jethro invoked Allah and supplicated Him to grant him victory over his people saying, ***" 'Our Lord! decide thou between us and our people in truth, for thou art the best to decide.' "*** (Al A`raaf: 89)

Allah would never ignore the supplication of His Messenger if he invoked Him against the disbelievers who had rejected the faith. Even though, the people of Jethro went on with their life of atheism and rejection of the mission of their Prophet as Allah says, ***"The leaders, the Unbelievers among his people, said: 'If ye follow Shu`aib be, sure then ye are ruined!"*** Allah describes their punishment saying, ***"So the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes in the morning!"*** (Al A`raaf: 91) Allah mentions that the people of Jethro were destroyed by the earthquake which overwhelmed their city and left them and their animals all dead. Allah punished them by inflicting on them many penalties which conformed to the ugly deeds they committed.

Allah punished them with the earthquake, the mighty blast and the overshadowing gloom which seized them.

In three *Surahs*, Allah mentions different kinds of penalty, each conforming to the different kinds of sins committed by the people of Jethro. In *Surah,* "Al A`raaf" (7), they threatened the Messenger of Allah and his followers and hence it was suitable for the penalty to be an earthquake which overwhelmed them. In *Surah,* "Hood" (11), Allah mentions that they were punished by the mighty blast as a punishment for scoffing at their Messenger and despising his teachings. They scoffed at him saying, ***"O Shu`aib! Does thy (religion of) prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practiced, or that we leave off doing what we like with our property? Truly, thou art the one that forbeareth with faults and is right-minded!"*** (Hood: 87) Their punishment therefore had to be a mighty blast for despising their Prophet. In *Surah,* "Al-Shu'araa", it is mentioned that they were seized by the overshadowing gloom as they demanded. Allah recorded such demand in the following verse, ***"But they rejected him. Then the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom seized them, and that was the Penalty of a Great Day."*** (Al Shu'araa': 189)

It is said that they were exposed to hot scorching whether. For seven consecutive days, not even a mild wind blew on them. They used water in order to alleviate the feeling of heat, but it was of no avail. They used to stay in shaded places and in caves, but this was all useless. They escaped to the desert where a cloud overshadowed them. They all gathered under it and only then, Allah made the cloud drop flames of fire on them. At the same time, the earth shook under their feet and a strong earthquake overtook them. Then, Allah sent on them a mighty blast which killed them all. Allah said, ***"The men who***

rejected Shu`aib became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished: the men who rejected Shu`aib, it was they who were ruined!" (Al A`raaf: 92)

The Salvation of the Believers:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"When Our decree issued, We saved Shu`aib and those who believed with him, by (special) Mercy from Ourselves: but the (mighty) Blast did seize the wrong-doers, and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there! Ah! Behold! How the Madyan were removed (from sight) as were removed the Thamud!"*** (Hood: 94-5) He also says: ***"The leaders, the Unbelievers among his people, said, 'If ye follow Shu`aib be, sure then ye are ruined!' But the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning! The men who rejected Shu`aib became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished: the men who rejected Shu`aib, it was they who were ruined!"*** (Al A`raaf: 91-2) This was the fittest reply to their saying, ***"If ye follow Shu`aib, be sure then ye are ruined!"*** (Al A`raaf: 90)

Allah mentions that Prophet Jethro then said, ***" 'O my people! I did indeed convey to you the Messages for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but how shall I lament over a people who refuse to believe!' "*** (Al A`raaf: 93) Jethro then left their city after they had been exposed to that severe penalty and he said, "I did my best and performed the duty allotted on me as far as I could. I tried hard to guide you to the righteous path, yet Allah guided whomever He would like. I am not sorry that you were so afflicted because you deserve it. You did not accept my advice and did not fear the Day of Judgment. How can I be sad for people who did not follow the advice of their Messenger?"

THE STORY OF PROPHET ISHMAEL (ISMA`IL), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Highlights on His Biography:

As noted earlier, Abraham had many sons but the most famous among them were the two great messengers Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was the elder and the one whom Abraham was about to offer in sacrifice. His mother was the Egyptian Hajar. It was claimed by some Jewish scholars that the one who was about to be offered in sacrifice was Isaac not Ishmael after they had altered the revealed books and misinterpreted them to match their purposes. Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his elder son, who was Ishmael. This can be best illustrated by the evidences drawn from their own books. There it was mentioned that Ishmael was born when Abraham was eighty-six years old but Isaac was born when Abraham was a hundred years old. So, undoubtedly, Ishmael was Abraham's elder son. Accordingly, for more than thirteen years Abraham had no children except Ishmael. Furthermore, it was Ishmael whom Abraham had taken along with his mother [Hajar] when he was still a young baby and went as far as the valleys of Faran mountains near Makkah and left them there helpless with nothing but some little food and water as an act of obedience to Allah's commands and out of confidence in Allah's promise. Allah then kept them safe and provided them with great bounties and sustenance.

Allah praises Ishmael in more than once in the Glorious Qur'an saying: ***"Also mention in the book (the story of) Ishmael; he was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a messenger (and) a Prophet, he used to enjoin on his people prayer and Zakat and he was most acceptable in the sight of his lord."*** (Maryam: 54-5) Allah also says: ***"So we***

gave him the good news of a forbearing son, then when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said, 'O my son! I have seen in a dream that I offer thee in sacrifice, now see what is thy view!" (The son) said, 'O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one of the stead fast.' " (Al Saaffaat: 101-2)

THE STORY OF ISAAC (IS-HAAQ) AND JACOB (YA`QOOB), PEACE BE UPON THEM

Isaac is the son of Abraham, peace be upon them. He was born when Abraham was one hundred years old, fourteen years after the birth of his brother Ishmael. His mother was ninety years old when she gave birth to him. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And we gave him the good news of Isaac, a Prophet, one of the righteous, we blessed him and Isaac, but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong to themselves."*** (Al Saaffaat: 112-3)

Allah praises Isaac more than once in the Glorious Qur'an. Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, reports that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The honorable, son of the honorable, son of the honorable, son of the honorable is the Messenger Joseph (Yoosuf), peace be upon him, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham."*

The People of the Book maintain that Isaac married Rifqa Ibnt Bitwaeel, during his father's life, when he was forty years old. She was barren at first but when he invoked Allah, she gave birth to twin sons. Ibn Katheer states: They called the first son Aisoo. The Arabic equivalent is Al-Ais and he is the father of the Romans. The second was Jacob or Israel, the father of the children of Israel.

The People of the Book maintain that Isaac used to favor Aisoo more than Jacob because he was his eldest son. On the other hand, their mother Rifqa loved Jacob more than Aisoo because he was younger. They said that when Isaac got old and grew weak in sight, he asked his son Aisoo to get him some food as he was a hunter. After he went out to fetch him food, the mother asked her other son Jacob to get two of his best

sheep and cook them for his father before his brother so that his father would bless him. She brought him the clothes of his brother and put the skin of sheep on his arms and neck because, unlike Jacob, Aisoo had a hairy body. When Jacob approached his father, Isaac asked him, Who are you? He answered, I am your son. Isaac said, The voice is like that of Jacob but the clothes and the body are like Aisoo's. When he finished his meal, he blessed him and prayed for him and his offspring.

When Jacob left, Aisoo brought food to his father as he asked. When he offered Isaac the food, he asked, What is this? Aisoo replied, This is the food you like to eat. Isaac wondered, "Did you not bring me food an hour ago and I ate it and prayed for you?" Aisoo replied, "No I swear by Allah."

Aisoo knew what Jacob had done and he got very upset. It was said that he vowed that he would kill his brother, Jacob, after his father's death. Later he asked his father to pray for him. Isaac invoked Allah for Aisoo and his offspring so that Allah would make them rulers of some rich parts of the earth and that Allah would grant them lavish provision. When their mother heard Aisoo's vow to kill his brother, she asked her son, Jacob, to go to her brother, Laban, in the land of Harran and to live with him and marry one of his daughters. She asked her husband, Isaac, to order Jacob to leave for his uncle land. He advised him and invoked Allah for him.

He went out at night. When he wished to sleep, he put a stone under his head. On that night, he had a dream that there was a pathway between heaven and earth through which the angels were ascending and descending and that Allah addressed him saying: "I will bless you and your progeny. This land will be yours and it will be owned by your offspring after your death." When he got up, he was very glad and vowed that if he

returned to his people safely, he would build at this very place a temple and that whatever he would have in the future, its tenth will be allocated to Allah. He marked the stone with fat so as to recognize it easily and he called this place "the House of Allah".

Ibn Katheer states: This is nowadays Jerusalem which Jacob built later on. The People of the Book maintain that when he went to his uncle at the land of Harran, he found that his uncle had two daughters: the elder was called Lia and the younger was called Rachel who was more beautiful. He asked his uncle to let him marry Rachel. His uncle accepted on the condition that Jacob would shepherd his sheep for seven years. When the term was over, his uncle prepared for a big feast and invited people to the wedding. But his uncle deceived Jacob and instead of giving him Rachel, he had him marry Lia who was less beautiful than her younger sister and even weak in sight. When Jacob asked his uncle, Why did you do so? He replied, We are used to marrying the elder daughter before the younger one. But if you want to marry Rachel, you should work for another seven years. He then worked for another seven years and she was given to him in marriage along with her sister.

Imam Ibn Katheer states: This was permissible in their law but later it was abrogated in the Torah. The People of the Book claim: Laban then gave each one of his daughters a slave-girl. The one that was given to Lia was Zulfa and the one that was given to Rachel was Balha. Lia had children before her sister did as she gave birth to Robeel, then Shemon, then Lawa and then Yahuza. At that time, Rachel felt jealous and gave her slave-girl to Jacob. This slave-girl, in turn, gave birth to Dan then to Niftaly. Lia also gave her slave-girl to Jacob and she gave birth to Haad and Ashier. Later, Lia also gave birth to a fifth boy called Isaakher, and a sixth one called Zayloon then

finally she gave birth to a girl child called Dina. After that, Rachel prayed to Allah to have a child with Jacob. Allah accepted her prayers and she gave birth to a beautiful child and called him Joseph.

All this happened while Jacob and his family were staying in the land of Harran. He spent six years there after his marriage to his two cousins in addition to the fourteen years he had spent before the marriage totaling twenty years. At that point, Jacob wished to return to his father and so he asked permission from his uncle. His uncle said: My property was blessed because of you. Ask me to give you whatever property you would like. Jacob said: Give me some of the young sheep born this year. You will give me each young sheep having more than one color, each black and white young sheep and each non-horned young goat.

The children of Laban took away all male sheep and he-goats which have such characteristics so that the female sheep and the she-goats would not give birth to young sheep and goats with the very same characteristics which Jacob requested from their father. Jacob would bring food similar in color to the young sheep and goats he asked from his uncle. When the sheep and goats saw such food, their youngsters would move in their mother's bellies and they acquired the color of the food that Jacob desired. Ibn Katheer maintains: This may be a miracle with which Allah supported Jacob. At the end of the year, Jacob had a large number of sheep, goats, animals and slaves. Both his uncle and cousins were so jealous because of what he had got.

Allah inspired Jacob to go back to the land of his father and his people and promised to support him. When Jacob informed his family, they said that they were ready to obey

him. Jacob took all his family members and his money. Rachel stole the idols worshipped by her father. Laban and his family followed Jacob and his family. Laban blamed Jacob for not informing him of the time of his departure so that Laban may see off his daughters and grandsons. Laban also inquired why they took away his idols. Jacob did not know that Rachel had taken her father's idols and he denied that he had such idols. Laban searched the houses of his daughters and their slave-girls but found nothing. Rachel hid the idols in the saddle of her camel and she sat on them. She said that she was menstruating and apologized that she could not dismount. That way, Laban failed to get back his idols.

On top of one of the hills in the area, Jacob promised Laban that he would never humiliate his daughters and that he would never marry any other woman besides Laban's daughters. After food was prepared and all people ate, Laban went home with his children. When Jacob reached the land of Sa'ir, he sent some messengers to his brother, Aisoo, in an attempt to reconcile with him. His messengers told him that his brother went out along with four hundred men to meet him. When Jacob knew that, he was terrified and prayed to Allah to protect him and fulfill His promise. He then prepared a magnificent gift to give to his brother. It was a huge host of sheep and cattle. He then ordered his slaves to take the gift to Aisoo. When Jacob saw his brother, Aisoo, he prostrated himself before him seven times.

Ibn Katheer states: This was their way of greeting at that time. It was lawful to greet each other in such a manner as the angels greeted Adam by prostrating themselves before him and as Joseph's brothers prostrated themselves before him. The People of the Book maintain: When Aisoo saw Jacob, he stepped forward, held him and wept. They walked together and when they went past Jerusalem, Jacob bought the farm of

Shakhaim Ibn Jamour, stayed there and built a house and an altar and called it the House of Allah.

Ibn Katheer says: This is nowadays Jerusalem which was renewed later by Solomon (Sulaiman), son of David (Dawood), peace be upon them. Likewise, this was the very place of the stone which he marked with fat, as mentioned earlier. Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, asked Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him: "*Which mosque was built first? The Prophet replied: The Sacred Mosque (in Makkah). Abu Dharr inquired further: Which one was next? The Prophet replied: The Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem). Abu Dharr asked once again: What is the interim period between both? The Prophet said: Forty years. Abu Dharr asked once more: Which one was next? The Prophet replied: Whenever prayer time is due, perform it. All land is a mosque (for the believer).*"

Ibn Katheer states: Thus Jacob built the Aqsa Mosque forty years after Abraham and Ishmael had built the Sacred Mosque. Next, Rachel gave birth to another child called Benjamin but she was unwell and died shortly after the delivery. Jacob buried her in Afrath which is nowadays Bethlehem. He built her a grave out of stone and it is still known at present as Rachel's Grave. Ibn Katheer says: Jacob then returned to live with his father Isaac and stayed with him at the village of Habron in the land of Canaan where Abraham lived. Later on, Isaac fell ill and died. He was one hundred and eighty years old when he died. His two sons, Aisoo and Jacob, buried him with his father Abraham.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH (YOOSUF), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Katheer states: Joseph is the son of Jacob, peace be upon them, and his mother is Rachel. Allah the Almighty revealed a complete *Surah* in the Glorious Qur'an full of lessons that could be drawn from. Allah, Exalted be He, says ***"Alif Lam Ra, these are the verses of the perspicuous book, we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an in order that you may learn wisdom."*** (Yoosuf: 1-2) In the above verse, Allah praises His Great Book revealed to His Messenger and Servant in Arabic. It is the most glorified Book revealed by Allah. The most glorified of all angels, Gabriel, dispatched it to the most honored creature, Muhammad, in the most scared city using the most lucid language.

When the Qur'an speaks about the foregoing events, it only relates the best and most outstanding among them all. The Glorious Qur'an reveals the truth as well as matters on which people may dispute. It also refutes the deviant ideologies and pinpoints their falsehood. As for commands and prohibitions, the Qur'an represents the most outstanding methodology to be followed as Allah, the Almighty, says: ***"We do relate unto you the most beautiful of stories in that we reveal to thee this (portion of the) Qur'an, before this you too was among those who knew it not."*** (Yoosuf: 3) This means that you, Muhammad, knew nothing about such events until We have revealed them to you. If a person ignores the teachings of the Qur'an and follows other ideologies, he will be exposed to such punishment.

Imam Ahmad states that Jabir Ibn `Abdullaah reports that `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab came to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, with a book which he obtained from some

of the People of the Book. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, got angry and blamed Omar for reading their book and added: *"I swear that I have carried straightforward methodology. Do not ask the People of the Book about any matter. They may tell you the truth and you will consider them liars. Or they may lie and you believe them. I swear that if Moses (Musa) had been alive, he would have surely followed me."* In another version by Imam Ahmad also, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"I swear that If Moses had been alive now and you followed him and left me, you would be misguided. You are my nation and I am your Prophet."* Then the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, ordered this book to be burnt down.

Joseph's Vision:

Ibn Katheer maintains: Jacob, peace be upon him, had twelve sons to whom the clans of the children of Israel belong, but Joseph was the eldest of them. Some scholars say that only Joseph among all the sons of Jacob was a Prophet. In fact, the deeds of his brothers in this story further strengthen this argument. Some scholars propose that the rest of Jacob's sons were Prophets as well. These scholars claim that Jacob's sons are the forefathers of the clans of the children of Israel. This claim lacks any validity. These forefathers belong to the children of Israel and there are not any Prophets among them who had received revelation from Heaven.

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Behold, Joseph said to his father: "O my father! I did see eleven stars and the sun and moon: I saw them prostrate themselves to me!" "Said the father": "My (dear) little son! Relate not this vision to your brothers lest they concoct a plot against you for Satan is to man an avowed enemy. Thus will your lord choose you and***

teach you the interpretation of stories and perfect his favor to you and to the posterity of Jacob - even as he perfected it to your fathers Abraham and Isaac aforetime: for your Lord is full of knowledge and wisdom." (Yoosuf: 4-6)

Exegetes explain that in Joseph's vision, the eleven stars refer to his brothers and the sun and the moon refer to his parents. When he narrated his vision to his father, his father expected that his son would assume a great position in this world as well as in the Hereafter. Jacob advised him to keep it a secret and not to tell his brothers about it so that they would not envy him nor plot against him. Therefore, in some Prophetic Traditions we are told: Secrecy might help one achieve one's purposes for people envy every graced person.

Allah says: ***"Thus will your lord choose you."*** Since you had this great vision and concealed it, Allah would favor you with mercy and grace, and ***"teach you the interpretation of stories."*** This means Allah will enable you to interpret dreams and the meaning of words which others cannot. He also will ***"perfect his favor to you"*** through revelation. Not only Joseph but on ***"the posterity of Jacob"*** who will attain the goodness of this world and the Hereafter because of him ***"even as He perfected it to your fathers Abraham and Isaac aforetime"*** Allah will grant you, Joseph, Prophethood as He granted it to your father Jacob and your grandfathers Isaac and Abraham. ***"For your Lord is full of knowledge and wisdom."*** When Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was asked: *"Which is the most honorable person?" he answered: The honorable, son of the honorable, son of the honorable, son of the honorable, he is Prophet Joseph, peace be upon him, who is a Prophet's son, a Prophet's grandson and a Prophet's great grandson."*

His Brothers' Plot against Him:

Allah the Almighty then says: ***"Verily in Joseph and his brethren are signs for seekers (after truth), they said: "Truly Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we, but we are a goodly body: really our father is obviously wandering (in his mind)."*** (Yoosuf: 7-8) Ibn Katheer states: Here Allah the Almighty points out the lessons deduced from this great story and refers to Joseph's brothers' envy and jealousy because they felt that their father loved him and his brother Benjamin more than he loved them though they were greater in number. So they said: ***"really our father is obviously wandering (in his mind)"*** because he loves Joseph more than he loves us. Then they considered murdering Joseph or taking him away to a faraway land so that he would not come back again. They said: ***"slay you Joseph or cast him out to some (unknown) land, that so the favor of your father may be given to you alone."*** They want their father to love only them. Yet, they intended to repent their sin after doing so: ***"(there will be time enough) for you to be righteous after that."***

When they agreed on that: ***"Said one of them 'slay not Joseph, but if you must do something, throw him down to the bottom of the well, he will be picked up by some caravan of travelers.' "*** (Yoosuf: 10) Qatadah and Ibn Is-haaq report that the person who thought of that was the eldest Robeel. He suggested that idea so that Joseph may be picked up by some caravan of travelers.

When they unanimously agreed on that plan, ***"They said, ' O our father: Why does you not trust us with Joseph - seeing we are indeed his sincere wishers? Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and we shall take every care of him.'"*** (Yoosuf: 11) They asked their father to send their

brother, Joseph, with them and they pretended that they wanted him just to enjoy himself and play. They concealed the truth which only Allah knows. Jacob, peace be upon him, told them: ***"Really it saddens me that you should take him away: I fear lest the wolf should devour him while you attend not to him."*** (Yoosuf: 13) It is very hard on me to have to depart with Joseph even for an hour. Besides, I am afraid that you may get too busy to keep an eye on him and so the wolf might devour him, as he cannot defend himself because he is still young. ***"They said: 'If the wolf were to devour him while we are (so large) a party, then should we indeed have perished ourselves!' "*** (Yoosuf: 14)

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"So they did take him away, and they all agreed to throw him down to the bottom of the well."*** They convinced their father to let Joseph come with them. Once they disappeared from the sight of their father, they unanimously agreed to throw him down into the bottom of the well. They decided to throw him on the rock that lies at the center of the well on which stands the person who hands water to over his mates when the well is not full. After they threw him down, Allah revealed to him, there must be an outlet of this crisis. You will recount to your brothers their act one day when you will most honored and in a lofty status while they will be afraid of you and will need your help and support. Allah says: ***"And we put into his heart (this message): "Of a surety you shall (one day) tell them the truth of this their affair while they know you not."*** (Yoosuf: 15) Ibn `Abbaas explains: You will tell them all about this while they do not recognize you.

When they threw him down in the well and left him alone, they took his shirt and stained it with blood and ***"then they came to their father in the early part of the night weeping"***.(Yoosuf: 16) Their return back in the night highlights

their treacherous act. They wept over their brother, but whoever weeps does not necessarily have to sincere. Tyrants do weep as well. ***"They said: 'O our father: we went racing with one another and left Joseph with our things and the wolf devoured him but you will never believe us even though we tell the truth.'*** "(Yoosuf: 17) They claimed that they left Joseph to take care of their clothes, but while they were away, the wolf devoured him. They told their father that he would never believe them even if he did not explicitly accuse them. However they were speechless when Jacob did accuse them. ***"They stained his shirt with false blood;"*** They butchered a newly born sheep, took its blood, and stained Joseph's shirt with it so that their father would believe that the wolf had devoured him. Yet, they forgot to tear the shirt. A liar will be always confused. Their father did not believe them and said: ***"Nay, but your minds have made up a tale (that may pass) with you, (for me) patience is most fitting; against that which you assert, it is Allah (alone) whose help can be sought."*** (Yoosuf: 18)

Joseph's Salvation:

Ibn Katheer states: Joseph remained in the well awaiting Allah's mercy. At the same time, his brothers waited near the well to find out what will happen. ***"Then there came a caravan of travelers."*** There were a group of travelers coming from Syria and heading for Egypt. ***"They sent their water-carrier (for water) and he let down his bucket (into the well)."*** They sent one of them to get water, but when he let down the bucket, Joseph clung to it. When this man saw Joseph, he said: ***"Ah there! good news: Here is a (fine) young man; so they concealed him as a treasure!"*** The man deceived the rest of the travelers telling them that he is a slave boy and that he bought him from the people near the well. Ibn `Abbaas explains: The verse means that Joseph's brothers concealed that he was their

brother and Joseph did not reveal the fact that that they were his brothers fearing that they might kill him. Instead, Joseph chose to be sold as a piece of good. ***"But Allah knows well all that they do."*** (19) Ibn Katheer maintains: Allah knew what Joseph's brothers and his buyer were contriving, and was capable of nullifying all their plots, but He The Almighty ordained this matter for a certain wisdom.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"They sold him for a miserable price, for a few dirhams counted out - in such low estimations did they hold him".*** (Yoosuf: 20) Ibn `Abbaas, Mujahid and other scholars maintain that the sellers were Joseph's brothers, but Qatadah claims that it is the traveler. Ibn Katheer says: It is rather a stronger point of view to claim that the sellers were Joseph's brothers because Allah mentions that they sold him at a very low price because they wanted to get rid him. If the travelers wanted to take Joseph for free, his brothers would still have given him away. As for the travelers, they were happy when they found Joseph. Had they been reluctant, they would never have bought him.

Then Allah says: ***"The man in Egypt who bought him said to his wife: "make his stay (among us) honorable, may be he will bring us much good or we shall adopt him as a son."*** The grace and mercy of Allah upon Joseph are best manifested in this situation. Allah wanted to prepare Joseph to attain the goodness of this world and the Hereafter. The master who finally bought Joseph was the high court official Potifar, who was in charge of the treasury. His real name was Atfir Ibn Rohib and the name of his wife was Ra'il and her title was Zelicha as Ibn Katheer mentions. The king of Egypt at that time was called Al-Rayyan Ibn Al-Walid; one of the Amalekites.

Ibn Is-haaq reports that Ibn Mas`ood, may Allah be

pleased with him, said: The most intelligent people are three: The Potifar of Egypt when he said to his wife: ***"make his stay (among us) honorable,"*** the woman who spoke to her father about Moses saying, ***"'O my (dear) father! engage him on wages, truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty.' "*** and `Abu Bakr As-Siddiq when he appointed `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab as a caliph succeeding him. Allah says: ***"Thus did we establish Joseph in the land."*** Ibn Katheer explains: Allah says that just like We make Potifar and his wife treat Joseph gently, We will make Joseph one of the senior officials in Egypt. Allah also says: ***"That We might teach him the interpretation of stories (and events) and Allah has full powers and control over his affairs; but most among mankind know it not"*** (Yoosuf: 21). Allah taught Joseph the interpretation of dreams. When Allah ordains something, He makes all things head in this direction in a way that most people do not have knowledge of.

Then Allah says: ***"When Joseph attained his full manhood, We gave him power and knowledge, thus do we reward those who do right"*** (Yoosuf: 23). This indicates that all the previous incidents had taken place before Joseph attained maturity. Zaid Ibn Aslam and As-Sh`abi state that "full manhood" refers to pubescence while Ibn `Abbaas, Mujahid and Qatadah maintain that it is the age of thirty-three. But Al-Hasan said that it is the age of forty.

The Attempts to Seduce Joseph and His Refusal:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self; she fastened the doors, and said: "now come, you (dear one)!"*** Allah mentions the attempt of Aziz's wife to seduce Joseph. She was a very beautiful and rich young lady and above all, she was his

mistress. She closed all doors and put on her best clothes, but Joseph, although he was very handsome, was a Prophet and a descendant of a long line of Prophets. Therefore, Allah protected him from committing this grievous sin and also saved him from her trap. Joseph is the master of the seven types of pious people mentioned in Prophet Muhammad 's *Hadith*: *"There are seven people whom Allah will cover with His shade at a time when there will be no other such shade: a just ruler, a man who remembers Allah while he is alone and his eyes sheds tears accordingly, a man whose heart is attached to mosques that whenever he gets out of the mosque, he soon returns, two men who love each other for the sake of Allah, a man who gives out charity secretly that his left hand does know how much his right hand has given out, a young man who worships Allah throughout his youth, and a man who has been seduced by a beautiful lady but he has refused to yield to temptation saying: I fear Allah."*

When she tried to seduce Joseph, he said: ***"Allah forbid! truly (your husband) is my Lord! he made my sojourn agreeable!"*** Thus I will never commit adultery with his wife when he has been so kind to me. ***"Truly to no good come those who do wrong!"*** (Yoosuf: 23) Then Allah says: ***"And (with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence of his Lord".*** Exegetes of the Qur'an are of different opinions in this regard. Some say that he wished to beat her, but Ibn Jareer claims that the most valid opinion is that he saw one of Allah's signs that prevented him from having what he really desired. Allah says: ***"Thus (did we order) that we might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds."*** Ibn Katheer explains: Allah says that as We have given him such a sign, We have turned him away from all evil deeds throughout his life, because ***"he was one of our servants; sincere and purified."*** (Yoosuf: 24) He, peace be

upon him, was one of the pious worshippers selected by Allah.

Allah says: ***"They both raced each other to the door."*** Joseph headed for the door but she followed him and ***"they found her Lord near the door."*** They saw her husband was by the door, so she started urging him to be harsh with Joseph. ***"She said: 'What is the (fitting) punishment for one who formed an evil design against your wife, but prison or a grievous chastisement?' "*** Although she was the one who should be accused of wrong doing, she accused Joseph instead and declared herself to be innocent. Joseph said: ***"It was she that sought to seduce me from my (true) self." And one of her household saw (this) and bore witness, (thus) "if it be that his shirt is rent from the front, then is her tale true, and is he a liar! but if it be that his shirt is torn from the back, then is she the liar, and he is telling the truth."*** (Yoosuf: 26-7) This man was one of hers or her husband's relatives. If the shirt was rent from the front, Joseph would be to blame because this would indicate that he tried to seduce her but she pushed him away causing the front of his shirt to be torn. If his shirt was rent from the back, this would indicate that he tried to escape from her clutches but she caught him thus causing his shirt to be torn, which was exactly what had happened. Therefore, Allah says: ***"So when he saw his shirt that it was torn at the back (her husband) said: "Behold! It is a snare of you women! Truly, mighty is your snare!"*** (Yoosuf: 28)

Then Potifar forgot about the whole matter saying: ***"O Joseph, pass this over. (O wife) ask forgiveness for your sin, for truly you have been at fault!"*** (Yoosuf: 29) He asked Joseph not to mention such matter to anybody, because concealing such things is more convenient. He found excuse for his wife because she saw a most handsome man like Joseph, and he ordered her to ask Allah for forgiveness and to repent to

Him. If a person repents to Allah, He will accept his repentance. Egyptians then, though they were idolaters, knew that only Allah forgives sinners.

The Affluent Ladies Learn of the Matter:

Ibn Katheer states: Some princesses and top officials' wives learned of the whole affair. They scorned Potifar's wife and said: ***"The wife of the (great) `Aziz (Potifar) is seeking to seduce her slave from his (true) self, truly has he inspired her with violent love."*** They blamed her for seeking to seduce her slave and for her fondness of him although he was not an equal to her. Therefore, they said: ***"We see she is evidently going astray."*** (Yoosuf: 30) Yet, ***"when she heard of their malicious talk,"*** she wanted to explain her reasons for doing so. She also wanted to show that this slave boy was not nothing like they thought he would be. Hence, ***"she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them; she gave each of them a knife and she said (to Joseph), "come out before them."*** She invited them to her house and prepared a banquet for them. She brought him fruits that were to cut with knives. She gave each a knife, asked Joseph to put on his best clothes, and ordered him to come out before them. He got out with a face brighter than the moon. Allah then says: ***"When they saw him, they did extol him and (in their amazement)."*** They admired him and thought that there was no such handsome man ever. Then they ***"cut their hands"*** because Joseph's charm made them dumbfounded so that they cut their hands instead of the fruits and did not even feel the pain. What is even more amazing is that, ***"They said "Allah preserve us: no mortal is this! this is none other than a noble angel!"*** (Yoosuf: 31)

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned that, on the night of ascension, he saw Joseph and he

was very handsome. Imam As-Suhaili and other scholars said that Joseph had half the charm of Adam, peace be upon them. Allah created Adam with His own hands and hence he was extremely handsome. The inhabitants of Paradise will enter it with their stature as tall as Adam and they will be handsome just like Joseph. The same thing applies to Sarah, Abraham's wife, who had half the charm of Eve.

Allah says: ***"She said "There before you is the man about whom you did blame me! I did seek to seduce him from his (true) self but he did firmly save himself guiltless! and now if he does not answer my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and (what is more) be of the company of the vilest!"*** (Yoosuf: 32) She praised Joseph for his chastity. The ladies urged him to listen to his mistress' commands but he refused and invoked Allah saying: ***"O my Lord! The prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me, unless you turn away their snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant."*** (Yoosuf: 33) Joseph appealed to Allah saying he was helpless and could not bring to himself good or evil. Only Allah grants him strength and protection from the snares of Satan. So, Allah says: ***"His Lord hearkened to him (in his prayer) and turned away from him their snare, verily He hears and knows (all things)."*** (Yoosuf: 34)

Unjust Imprisonment:

Allah said: ***"Then it occurred to the men after they had seen the Signs (that it was best) to imprison him for a time."*** (Yoosuf: 35) Ibn Katheer states: To Potifar, it appeared as if it might be in his wife's best interest that Joseph should disappear by putting him in prison. They wanted to prove that it was Joseph who sought to seduce her and hence they, unjustly,

imprisoned him. This was ordained by Allah to protect Joseph from the snares of Satan. Then Allah said: ***"Now with him there came into the prison two young men."*** One of them was the king's cupbearer and the other was his baker. The king accused them of some crimes and imprisoned them consequently. When they saw Joseph, peace be upon him, they admired his deeds and acts of devotion. Both saw a vision, seemingly on the same night. The cupbearer dreamed that there had been three rods which budded and produced grapes which he took, made wine of and offered to the king. The baker dreamed that he carried three baskets of bread on his head while birds of prey ate pieces from the upper basket. They narrated the two visions and asked Joseph to interpret them because they ***"See thou art (one) are one that does good (to all)."***

Joseph told them that he knew the interpretation of their visions saying: ***"Before any food comes (in due course) to feed either of you I will surely reveal to you the truth and meaning of this before it befall you."*** This means that whatever dream they had, Joseph would interpret it, or rather, before they received any food, he would tell them whether it was sweet or sour. Joseph said: ***"That is part of the (duty) which my lord has taught me, I have (I assure you) abandoned the ways of a people that believe not in Allah and that (even) deny the hereafter, and I follow the ways of my fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."*** (Yoosuf: 37) That is what Allah taught me because I believe that He is One and the only One. I follow the belief of my forefathers; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Joseph continued: ***"And never could we attribute any partners whatever to Allah, that (comes) of the grace of Allah to us and to mankind, yet most men are not grateful."*** (Yoosuf: 38) Allah ordered us to invite mankind to worship Him but most people have gone astray.

Then Joseph invited them to monotheism, and explained the abased status of the idols they worshipped: ***"O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you): are many lords differing among themselves better or Allah, the one supreme and irresistible? If not Him you worship nothing but names which you have named - you and your fathers - for which Allah has sent down no authority, the command, for no one but Allah."*** (Yoosuf: 39) Allah alone guides whomever He wills and misguides whomever He wills. ***"He has commanded that you worship none but Him, that is the right religion, but most men understand not."*** Although the path of Allah is straightforward, most people go astray. Joseph's attempt to guide these two men was perfect because they held him in high esteem, and were hence ready to accept whatever he said. He first guided them to the belief that will be most beneficial in the Hereafter. After that, he said: ***"O my two companions of the prison! as to one of you, he will pour out the wine for his lord to drink."*** This is a reference to the cupbearer who will pour out wine to the king. Concerning the baker, he said: ***"As for the other he will hang from the cross and the birds will eat from off his head (so) has been decreed that matter whereof ye twin do inquire."*** (Yoosuf: 41) This was inevitable.

Then Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And of the two to that one whom he considered about to be saved, he said "mention me to your lord" but Satan made him forget to mention him to his lord; and (Joseph) lingered in prison a few (more) years."*** (Yoosuf: 42) The person who escaped death was the cupbearer. Joseph asked him to say to the king that he was unjustly imprisoned. This verse indicates that it is permissible to take the necessary possible procedures available and this does not contradict dependence on Allah. But Satan made the cupbearer forget to intercede for Joseph and hence he stayed in prison from three to nine years.

Joseph's Interpretation of the King's Vision:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"The king (of Egypt) said: "I do see (in a vision) seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered. O ye chiefs! Expound to me my vision, if it be that you can interpret visions.' "*** (Yoosuf: 43) Ibn Katheer explains: Allah made this incident a reason for Joseph's release from prison. People of the Book claim that Al-Rayyan Ibn Al-Walid, King of Egypt, dreamed that he was standing on a river bank where he saw seven fat cows grazing in a garden near the bank. Then seven lean cows got out of the river, grazed with the fat ones and then ate them. The king got up very upset but fell asleep again. Again, he saw seven green ears of corn in one bunch which were eaten up by seven other withered ears of corn. Ibn Katheer states: When the king told his people about his dream, they did not know how to interpret it and even said that it was ***"A confused medley of dreams: and we are not skilled in the interpretation of dreams."*** (Yoosuf: 44) Here, the cupbearer remembered Joseph. It is noteworthy that this was all ordained by Allah.

Allah says: ***"But the man who had been released, one of the two (who had been in prison) and who now bethought him after (so long) a space of him, said: "I will tell you the truth of its interpretation: send you me (therefore)."*** (Yoosuf: 45) The man remembered after several years. Mujahid interprets the verse as meaning he remembered Joseph after he had already forgotten all about him. He asked the king to send him to Joseph in his prison. When he met Joseph, he said: ***"O Joseph!" (He said) "O man of truth! Expound to us (the dream) of seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour. And seven green ears of corn and (seven) others withered, that I may return to the people and that they may understand."***

(Yoosuf: 46) Joseph did not blame him for forgetting about him all that time. He did not even express his desire to be released at that moment. Instead, he interpreted the dream without stipulating any conditions. He said: ***"For seven years shall you diligently sow as is your wont."*** He told the cupbearer that Egyptians would cultivate their lands for seven consecutive years yielding a rich harvest. Joseph even guided the cupbearer to an agricultural policy that would be of great help to his people. He said: ***"The harvests that you reap you shall leave them in the ear except a little, of which you shall eat."*** (Yoosuf: 47) He advised them to save the harvest of these seven years except for small quantities they would eat. Then he interpreted the seven withered cows as seven barren years where the land would not yield any harvest. Even the seeds they would saw would be use of no use at all to them. Allah says: ***"Then will come after that (period) seven dreadful (years), which will devour what you shall have laid by in advance for them - (all) except a little which you shall have (specially) guarded."*** (Yoosuf: 48) He next told them that there would be a year in which rains would fall and they would press grapes, olives, sugarcane... etc. Allah says: ***"Then will come after that (period) a year in which the people will have abundant water and in which they will press (wine and oil)."*** (Yoosuf: 49)

Joseph's Preeminence:

Ibn Katheer states: When the king was acknowledged of Joseph's intelligence and comprehensive understanding, he wanted to see him. He sent a messenger to fetch Joseph so as to appoint him as one of his retinues. Allah says: ***"So the king said: 'Bring him to me', but when the messenger came to him,"*** i.e. when the messenger met Joseph, he would not want to get out of prison unless all people knew that he had been unjustly jailed. So, he told the messenger to return back to the

king so that he may investigate the matter and ascertain that he resisted the ladies' plans to commit adultery. I am sure that Potifar knows full well that I am innocent. Allah says: ***"Joseph said: 'Go thou back to thy lord and ask him: 'What was the matter with the ladies who cut their hands? For my Lord is certainly well aware of their snare.' "*** (Yoosuf: 50) When the ladies were asked about this matter, they confessed that he was a straightforward, scrupulous young man. Allah said: ***"The king said (to the ladies): 'What was your affair when you did seek to seduce Joseph?' (The ladies) said: 'Allah preserve us: no evil know we against him!' "*** Only then did Potifar's wife confess that Joseph is not guilty and that he was unjustly put into prison. ***"Said the Aziz's wife: "Now is the truth manifest (to all): It was I who sought to seduce him, he is indeed of those who are (ever) true (and virtuous). This (say I), in order that he may know that I have never been false to him in his absence, and that Allah will never guide the snare of the false ones."*** (Yoosuf: 51) It is said that the last sentence is uttered by Joseph. He asked the king to investigate this matter so that Potifar would know that I had been loyal to him. Yet, many late scholars support the view that that sentence was said by Zelicha. She confessed to what happened so that her husband may know that she did not commit adultery. It was just an attempt to seduce Joseph. Then Allah says: ***"Yet I do not absolve myself (of blame): the (human) soul certainly incites evil, unless my Lord do bestow His mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."*** (Yoosuf: 52)

Some exegetes say that the last two verses were spoken by the Potifar's wife. There are both good reason and authority to support this. But others maintain that they were spoken by Joseph in which case they would mean that Joseph was referring to his fidelity to Potifar and that he had never taken advantage of his absence to cheat on him with his wife,

although he (Joseph) was human and liable to err.

When the king heard this, he again sent to Joseph because he was very eager to see him. Now that Joseph's innocence, wisdom, truth and trustworthiness had been proven and confirmed, the king was much impressed and wanted him to be his trusted minister and confidante. Allah said: ***"So the king said: 'Bring him to me, I will take him specially to serve about my own person, therefore when he had spoken to him, he said: 'Be assured this day, thou art, before our own Presence, with rank firmly established, and fidelity fully proved!' (Joseph) said: 'Set me over the storehouses of the land: I will indeed guard them as one that knows (their importance)."*** (Yoosuf: 55) Joseph asked the king to make him in charge of the storehouses of food so that he may hold Allah in reverence when distributing portions among people as they were expecting seven arid years. Joseph said that he was an honest person who would spare no effort in taking care of these stores. The last verse indicates that a person may seek to be appointed as a ruler or a commander if he knows well that he has the capacity, honesty and trustworthiness to undertake his responsibilities.

Then Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Thus did we give established power to Joseph in the land, to take possession therein as, when, or where he pleased."*** (Yoosuf: 56) After being imprisoned, Joseph became the sole top official of Egypt with the authority to do whatever he wanted. All this was a reward from Allah to the believer and the reward at the Hereafter will be much more handsome. Allah says: ***"We bestow of our mercy on whom we please. And We suffer not to be lost the reward of those, who do good. But verily the reward of the hereafter is the best, for those who believe and are constant in righteousness."*** (Yoosuf: 57) It is said that by

that time Potifar had died and Joseph succeeded him in his office. It was reported that Joseph married Zelicha (Zulaikhah) and was an honest minister.

The Arrival of Joseph's Brothers to Egypt:

Many years passed; the times of prosperity went by; famine held the land in its grip; and it extended to neighboring countries. Because of the famine, Joseph's brothers came from Canaan to buy corn. Though he recognized them, they were actually unable to. Joseph gave his brothers the usual portion he used to give all people. Allah says: ***"Then came Joseph's brethren, they entered his presence and he knew them but they knew him not. And when he had furnished them forth with provisions (suitable) for them, he said: 'Bring to me a brother ye have of the same father as yourselves (but a different mother), see ye not that I pay out full measure and that I do provide the best hospitality?"*** (Yoosuf: 58-9) He asked them about their life and how many they were. They told him that they were twelve, one of whom got lost and the other stayed with his father. Joseph asked them to bring their brother along if they would come the following year. He warned them that he would not give them their due portions if they did not bring him with them. ***"Now if ye bring him not to me, ye shall have no measure (of corn) from me, nor shall ye (even) come near me."*** (Yoosuf: 60) They promised him that they would do whatever they could to bring him the following year. ***"They said: 'We shall try to win him from his father indeed we shall do it.' "*** (Yoosuf: 61)

Joseph ordered his servants to hide his brothers' stock-in-trade (with which they had bartered) into their saddlebags ***"(Joseph) told his servants to put their stock in trade (with which they had bartered) into their saddlebags, so they should***

know it only when they returned to their people, in order that they might come back." (Yoosuf: 62) It is said that Joseph wanted them to return back the goods that were hidden in their saddles when they reached home. Other scholars maintain that Joseph was afraid that his brothers may not have any other stock in trade to support them the following year. Still others claim that he did not want to take their stock in trade in return for the corn.

The Return of Joseph's Brothers along with Benjamin:

When Joseph's brothers returned to their father, they asked him to send Benjamin with them the following year. They told him that if Benjamin did not come with them, they would not be given corn. Allah says: ***"Now when they returned to their father, they said: 'O our father! No more measure of grain shall we get (unless we take our brother): so send our brother with us, that we may get our measure and we will indeed take every care of him.' "*** (Yoosuf: 63) This is similar to what they said about Joseph earlier: ***"Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and we shall take every care of him."*** (Yoosuf: 12) Jacob inquired if they would do with Benjamin what they had done with Joseph before. Yet, he had trust in Allah, and he was certain that He would have mercy on him. He hoped that Allah would return his dear son back to him. Allah says: ***"He (Jacob) said: "shall I trust you with him with any result other than when I trusted you with his brother a fore time? but Allah is the best to take care (of him), and he is the most merciful of those who show mercy."*** (Yoosuf: 64)

Then Allah says: ***"When they opened their baggage, they found their stock in trade had been returned to them, they said: 'O our father: what (more) can we desire? This our***

stock in trade has been returned to us. So we shall get (more) food for our family; we shall take care of our brother; and add (at the same time) a full camel's load (of grain to our provisions) this is but a small quantity." (Yoosuf: 65) They convinced Jacob that they would get more food to their family if he sent Benjamin with them.

Jacob was very reluctant to send his son with them because this son was a source of comfort and consolation for him, especially given the absence of his dear brother, Joseph. The family's need of provision in the time of famine at length made Jacob relent as Ibn Is-haaq states. Yet, he got a solemn promise from the brothers, under the most religious sanctions that they would bring Benjamin back to him unless they were themselves prevented from doing so. Allah says: ***"(Jacob) said: 'Never will I send him with ye until ye swear a solemn oath to me, in Allah's name, that ye will be sure to bring him back to me unless ye are yourselves hemmed in (and made powerless).' And when they had sworn their solemn oath, he said: 'Over all that we say, be Allah the Witness and Guardian!' "*** (Yoosuf: 64)

Allah also says: ***"Further he (Jacob) said: 'O my sons! Enter not all by one gate: enter ye by different gates. Not that I can profit you ought against Allah (with my advice): None can command except Allah: on Him do I put my trust: and let all that trust put their trust on him.' "*** (Yoosuf: 67) Ibn `Abbaas and other scholars maintain that Jacob commanded them to do so because he was afraid that they may be envied because they were very handsome. Ibn Katheer claims: Envying others' charm is an indisputable matter and it happens in real life. Yet his advice would not prevent what Allah predestined from taking place. Jacob said: ***"Not that I can profit you ought against Allah (with my advice)."*** Then Allah said: ***"When they***

entered in the manner their father had enjoined, it did not profit them in the least against (Plan of) Allah: It was but a necessity of Jacob's soul , which he discharged. For he was by Our instruction full of knowledge (and experience), but most men know not. Now when they came into Joseph's presence, he received his (full) brother to stay with him, he said (to him): 'Behold: I am thy (own) brother: so grieve not at ought of their doings.' " (Yoosuf: 68-9) Joseph met his brother Benjamin alone and recounted to him what had happened to him, and asked him not to regret for what they had done. He also asked him not to reveal his true identity to their brothers. Joseph told him that he would contrive a plan so that Benjamin would stay with him.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"At length when he had furnished them forth with provisions (suitable) for them he put the drinking cup into his brother's saddlebag, then shouted out a Crier: 'O ye (in) the Caravan! Behold! Ye are thieves without doubt." They said, turning towards them, 'what is it that ye miss?" They said: 'We miss the great beaker of the king: for him who produces it, is (the reward of) a camel load; I will be bound by it."* (Yoosuf: 72) He planned that the king's valuable drinking cup should be concealed in Benjamin's saddlebag. When it was found after an ostentatious search, he would detain the supposed culprit and realize his objective as the story relates further on.

When Joseph's brothers were accused of stealing the cup, they denied and pointed out that their behavior was unblemished as was quite known to the Egyptians. Allah says: *"The brothers said: 'By Allah! well ye know that we came not to make mischief in the land and we are no thieves!" (The Egyptians) said: 'What then shall be the penalty of this if ye are (proved) to have lied?" They said: 'The penalty should be*

that he in whose saddlebag it is found, should be held (as bondman) to atone for the (crime). Thus it is We punish the wrongdoers!" (Yoosuf: 73-5) The divine law followed by Joseph's brothers was that the thief was to be handed over to the person who was robbed as a bondsman. That was exactly what Joseph wanted.

In order to dismiss any suspicions, Joseph started off by searching Benjamin's brothers' baggage as Allah says: ***"So he began (the search) with their baggage, before (he came to) the baggage of his brother; at length he brought it out of his brother's baggage, thus did We plan for Joseph, he could not take his brother by the law of the king except that Allah willed it (so), we raise to degrees (of wisdom) whom we please, but over all endued with knowledge is One, the All-knowing."*** (Yoosuf: 76) This is Allah's plan which worked successfully because it sought to achieve a good purpose; Joseph's reunion with his father and family. Unless Joseph's brothers conceded that the thief was to be taken as a bondman, Joseph would never have managed to detain Benjamin. Joseph had recourse to this plan because he knew the divine law which they followed. Therefore, Allah praised him that he was knowledgeable but Allah is All-Knowing.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"They said: 'If he steals, there was a brother of his who did steal before (him).' "*** It is said that Joseph had stolen his grandfather's (his mother's father) idol and broken it. Allah then says: ***"But these things did Joseph keep locked in his heart, revealing not the secrets to them. He (simply) said (to himself): "Ye are the worse situated; and Allah knoweth best the truth of what ye assert!"*** (Yoosuf: 77) Then they started to beg Joseph, but he pointed out that he could not release the wrongdoer and arrest the innocent instead. He would just take the thief in possession of

whom the cup was found. ***"They said: 'O Exalted One! Behold! He has a father, aged and venerable, (who will grieve for him), so take one of us in his place; for we see that thou art (gracious) in doing good.' He said: 'Allah forbid that we take other than him with whom we found our property: indeed (if we did so), we should be acting wrongfully.' "*** (Yoosuf: 79)

The Brothers' Return to their Father with the Sad News:

Ibn Katheer states: When the brothers gave up all hope of having Benjamin back, they discussed the matter with each others, as Allah says: ***"Now when they saw no hope of his (yielding), they held a conference in private. The leader among them said: 'Know ye not that your father did take an oath from you in Allah's name, and how before this, ye did fail in your duty with Joseph? Therefore will I not leave this land until my father permits me or Allah commands me, and he is the best to command."*** (Yoosuf: 80) Their elder brother Robeel reminded them that they broke their promise with their father as regards Joseph and that he no longer had the courage to face his father. He would stay in Egypt until his father allowed him to return back or Allah ordained the return of Benjamin. Then he asked them to tell their father that Benjamin had stolen and that they had not known the unseen to take precautions. They had just replied to the question regarding the retribution of the thief. He said: ***"Turn ye back to your father, and say: 'O our father! Behold! Thy son committed theft! We bear witness only to what we know and we could not well guard against the unseen! Ask at the town where we have been and the caravan in which we returned, and (you will find) we are indeed telling the truth."*** (Yoosuf: 82) They asked their father to ascertain their story as it was known in Egypt.

When they returned back to Jacob and told him the news,

"Jacob said: 'Nay, but ye have yourselves contrived a story (good enough) for you. So patience is most fitting (for me)." This is the very same sentence he said when they brought him Joseph's shirt stained with blood. He hoped Allah would bring him back his three sons; Joseph, Benjamin and Robeel. He said: *"Maybe Allah will bring them (back) all to me (in the end), for He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom.' And he turned away from them, and said: 'How great is my grief for Joseph!' And his eyes became white with sorrow and he felt into silent melancholy."* (Yoosuf: 85) The new sad event reminded Jacob of the old sad saga and he wept so much that he lost his eyesight and he did not even complain to any creature. When his sons saw such sadness and sorrow, they had mercy on their father and said: *"By Allah: (never) will ye cease to remember Joseph until thou reach the last extremity of illness, or until thou die."* (Yoosuf: 85) They blamed him for frequently remembering Joseph to the extent that his body weakened and his health deteriorated. Jacob replied that he did not complain to any creature and that he directed all his requests and invocation to his Creator. Even though, he knew full well that Allah would relieve his sorrow. He was sure that Joseph's dream would come true and that one day he and his sons would prostrate themselves before Joseph as he dreamed. Even more, he urged them not to lose hope and to resume their search for Joseph and his brother. Allah says: *"He (Jacob) said: 'I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allah, and I know from Allah that which ye know not... O my sons! go you and enquire about Joseph and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's soothing mercy: truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing mercy except those who have no faith."* (Yoosuf: 86-7)

Joseph Reveals his Identity to His Brothers:

Ibn Katheer states: Joseph's brothers headed for Egypt and when they met Joseph, they complained that they suffered because of the barrennes of land, lack of food and the large number of children. They had the price of food but it was not enough. They asked him to give them the amount of food he used to when they paid as little as they did then. Allah says: ***"Then, when they came (back) into (Joseph's) presence they said: 'O exalted one: distress has seized us and our family: we have (now) brought but scanty capital; so pay us full measure, (we pray thee), and treat it as charity to us for Allah doth reward the charitable."*** (Yoosuf: 88) The last sentence may indicate that they asked him to return their brother back or to accept that low price.

When Joseph saw their miserable state and remembered his dear father, he pitied them and revealed his real identity. It is said that he had done so according to Allah's command as he had concealed himself according to His command as well. Allah says: ***"He said: 'Know ye how ye dealt with Joseph and his brother, not knowing (what ye were doing)?" They said: 'Art thou indeed Joseph?' "*** (Yoosuf: 89) They wondered because they saw him more than once yet they had not recognized him. Joseph introduced himself and his brother to indicate to them that despite the fact that they harbored malicious feelings of envy towards them, Allah's grace overwhelmed them all through this dramatic reunion. Allah says: ***"He said: 'I am Joseph, and this is my brother: Allah has indeed been gracious to us (all); behold, he that is righteous and patient, never will Allah suffer the reward to be lost, of those who do right."*** (Yoosuf: 90) They confessed that Allah favored him by granting him good appearance, authority and Prophethood and they even confessed their guilt. ***"They said: 'By Allah; indeed has***

Allah preferred thee above us and we certainly have been guilty of sin!" (Yoosuf: 91) Joseph did not blame them for their deeds. Instead, he invoked Allah to bestow mercy upon them. ***"He said: 'this day let no reproach be (cast) on you: Allah will forgive you and He is the most merciful of those who show mercy!"*** (Yoosuf: 92) Then he asked them to bring him all the family of Jacob, having wept incessantly over his sons. ***"Go with this my shirt, and cast it over the face of my father; he will come to see (clearly). Then come ye (here) to me together with all your family."***(Yoosuf: 93)

Joseph's Dream Comes True:

When the brothers left Egypt, Jacob told the rest of his sons who were staying with him that he smelled the scent of Joseph although the caravan was very far away. He was afraid that they might accuse him of being insane and senile. Allah says: ***"When the caravan left (Egypt), their father said: 'I do indeed scent the presence of Joseph: Nay think me not a dotard.' They said: 'By Allah: truly thou atr in thine old wandering mind.' "*** (Yoosuf: 95) Qatadah and As-Suddyy state that this last sentence screamed with harshness and they should not have spoken so to a Prophet of Allah's. ***"Then when the bearer of the good news came, he cast (the shirt) over his face and he forthwith regained clear sight. He said: 'Did I not say to you, 'I know from Allah that which ye know not?' They said: 'O our father ask for us forgiveness for our sins, for we were truly at fault.' He said: 'Soon will I ask my lord for forgiveness for you: for He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."*** (Yoosuf: 98) Ibn Mas`ood maintains that Jacob postponed such invocation until before the dawn. It was reported that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Our Lord descends to the lower heaven every night and says: Is there any one to repent so that I may accept his*

repentance? Is there any one to ask for anything so that I may give him? Is there any one to ask for forgiveness so that I may forgive him?"

Then Allah narrates Joseph's reunion with his father and family after a long period of separation. The context indicates that it was thirty-four years. The Potifar's wife tried to seduce him when he was seventeen as some scholars propose. He refused and was jailed for seven years as `Ikrimah maintains. After being released, there came the seven productive years, and when people needed food, his brothers came on the first year. The following year, Benjamin came with them. In the third year, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers and asked them to bring all his family. Before they entered Egypt, Joseph went to receive his family, having been informed that they neared Egypt. The king ordered the princes and the elite to go out with Joseph, and it is said that the king himself went out to receive Prophet Jacob. Allah says: ***"Then when they entered the presence of Joseph, he provided a home for his parents with himself, and said: 'Enter ye Egypt (all) in safety if it pleases Allah"*** (Yoosuf: 99)

When they entered Egypt, Joseph asked his parents sit on his chair and he, along with his eleven brothers, all prostrated themselves before him by way of showing respect to them. This was allowed in their law but it is prohibited in Islam. Allah says: ***"And he raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity) and they fell down in prostration (all) before him. He said: 'O my father! This is the fulfillment of my vision of old! Allah hath made it come true! He was indeed good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you (all here) out of the desert, (even) after Satan had sown enmity between me and my brothers. Verily my Lord understandeth best the mystery of all that He planneth***

to do. For verily He is full of knowledge and wisdom." (Yoosuf: 100) Joseph reminded his father that that was the realization of his dream when he saw that eleven planets, the sun and the moon prostrated themselves before him. After a period of grief, Allah made him a senior official in Egypt. Even after Satan had sown enmity between Joseph and his brothers, Allah bestowed mercy upon them and facilitated the way for their reunion through miraculous means which He alone could manage.

When Joseph saw that Allah's grace had overwhelmed him and his family, he knew that the significant event to look forward to would have to be Judgement in the Hereafter. Whereupon, he praised Allah and confessed His grace and beneficence unto him. He asked Allah to cause him to die as a Muslim and meet the righteous worshippers in the Hereafter. Allah says: ***"O my lord! Thou hast indeed bestowed on me some power, and taught me something of the interpretation of dreams - O Thou Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my Protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Take Thou my soul (at death) as one submitting to Thy will (as a Muslim), and unite me with the righteous."*** (Yoosuf: 101) Joseph's last sentence is similar to the famous invocation: "O Allah make us lead our lives as Muslims and die as Muslims." It is probable that Joseph had invoked Allah during the throes of death just like Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, had done. It is also possible that he invoked Allah to die and this was allowed in the divine law they followed at that time. Ibn `Abbaas states: No Prophet had ever wished for death before Joseph. As regards the Islamic law, it prohibited Muslims to invoke Allah to die except during trials, as in the Prophetic tradition narrated by Imam Ahmad and reported by Mu`adh that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, invoked as thus: ***"If You***

wanted to afflict a group of people with a trial, make us die without being affected with it." In another Prophetic *Hadith*, the Prophet says: *"Son of Adam, death is better for you than being exposed to trials."* When the Prophet faced severe trials and combat was very tough, `Ali Ibn Abi Taalib wished for death. Imam Al-Bukhari also wished for death when his opponents attacked him harshly.

In case of smooth living conditions, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"None of you should wish for death because of a calamity which afflicted him. If he is righteous, he will do extra good deeds. If he is a bad person, he may repent."* Death blocks all these potential channels. *"Rather he should say: O Allah, let me live as long as life is better for me and let me die if death is better for me."* Ibn Katheer states: The calamity referred to in the previous *Hadith* is a worldly one relating to one's health, for example, and not to one's religion.

The Death of Jacob and Joseph:

The People of the Book mention that Jacob died after a seventeen year long stay in Egypt. As-Suddyy states: After his death, Joseph took his body to Syria and buried him there in the cave where his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham, were buried. The People of the Book also maintain: Before Joseph's death, he asked his brothers to carry his body if they got out of Egypt and bury him in that very same cave. He died when he was one hundred and twenty years old. After his death, his brothers buried him and his body was kept in Egypt until Prophet Moses, peace be upon him, moved him out and buried him with his father and grandfathers.

THE STORY OF JOB (AYYOOB), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Is-haaq states that his name was Job, son of Moss, son of Zarah, son of `Aisoo, son of Isaac, son of Abraham. Ibn `Asakir reports that his mother was the daughter of Lot, peace be upon him. Ibn Katheer maintains: It is well known that he belongs to the progeny of Abraham, peace be upon him. He was one of the messengers to whom Allah had sent inspiration as He says: ***"We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him; we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon and to David We gave the Psalms."*** (Al Nisaa': 163)

His Sickness and His Patience:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And (remember) Job, when he cried to his Lord, 'truly distress has seized me, but thou are the Most Merciful of those that are merciful.' So We listened to him: We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his people to him and doubled their number as a Grace from Ourselves, and a thing for commemoration for all who serve Us."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 83-4) Allah also says: ***"Commemorate Our servant Job, behold he cried to his Lord: 'The Evil One has afflicted me with distress and suffering!' (The command was given:) 'Strike with your foot: here is (water) wherein to wash, cool, and refreshing, and water to drink, and We gave him (back) his people and doubled their number as a Grace from Ourselves a thing for commemoration, for all who have understanding.*** (Saad: 43-4)

Qur'an exegetes and historians maintain that Job was a very rich man. He had a lot of cattle, sheep, slaves and lands.

He also had a lot of children. But he lost all that. Further more, he was covered with loathsome sores from head to foot. Only his heart and his tongue remained untouched and he used to hold Allah in remembrance and he stuck to patience.

Al-Maraghi explains in his exegesis: There are many Israelite traditions which state that people loathed him because of his illness and that they were very reluctant even to come near him. They even dismissed him out of the city. Only his good wife refused to leave him alone. She kept on helping him and caring for him during his period of affliction. All these were untrue narratives which should not be held as valid. There is no proof to support them. Besides, it is stipulated that Prophets should be free from any illness that induces people's loathing. If a Prophet is afflicted this way, he cannot meet people and tell them about the laws and rules which Allah revealed.

When Job's sickness lasted for a long time, only his wife used to care for him. She did so in return for his previous kindness to her. She even used to work in order to be able to afford food and other necessities of life. She was very patient after they lost their children and property. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The most afflicted people are the Prophets, then the righteous and the most pious people. Every man is to be exposed to trials that match the strength of his belief. If he had stronger faith, his trials would be harder."* Job had never lost his faith but always turned to Allah. He was really a great Prophet and a brilliant example of dignified patience that was quite becoming for a great Prophet of Allah who was ever trustful in Him and His promise. Wahb Ibn Munabbih states that the period of affliction lasted for three years. Anas says it was seven years and several months. Humaid believes it was eighteen years.

As-Suddyy maintains: When this period lasted for a long time, his wife told him: If you invoke Allah, He will relieve your distress. He replied: I have lived for seventy years in perfect health. Is it too much to have patience for another seventy years? Ibn Katheer said: When people refused to hire his wife lest she should pass any of her husband's diseases to them, she resorted to selling any valuable possessions she had. At last, she was obliged to sell one of her braids to a woman in return for a big amount of food. When Job saw it, he asked her, "Where did you get it from?" She replied, I served people in return for it. On the next day she sold her second braid and brought him food. He swore that he would not eat until he knew how she paid for it. She unveiled her head. When he found out that she had cut her hair, he was very distressed and said: ***"Truly distress has seized me, but thou are the Most Merciful of those that are merciful."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 83)

Allah Relieves Job's Distress:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"So We listened to him: We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his people to him and doubled their number as a Grace from Ourselves, and a thing for commemoration for all who serve Us."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 84) Ibn `Abbaas says that Allah the Almighty gave him back double as much money as he used to have and twice the number of children. Al-Hasan and Qatadah explain: Allah brought his children back to life again and He gave him others similar in number. It is also said that Allah rewarded him for sticking to patience when he lost his children and gave him others instead in this world and they will be all reunited in the Hereafter. Allah did so ***"as a Grace from Ourselves, and a thing for commemoration for all who serve Us."*** Ibn Katheer states: Allah made Job an example so that the afflicted may know that Allah had not ordained that because

they are of little importance in the sight of Allah. They rather should follow the example of Job.

Allah also says: ***"Commemorate Our servant Job, behold he cried to his Lord: 'The Evil One has afflicted me with distress and suffering!'*** It is said that the ***"distress"*** refers to his sickness and ***"suffering"*** refers to losing his children and money. Allah, the All Merciful, accepted his invocation and ordered him to: ***"(The command was given:) 'Strike with your foot: here is (water) wherein to wash, cool, and refreshing, and water to drink, and We gave him (back) his people and doubled their number as a Grace from Ourselves a thing for commemoration, for all who have understanding."*** (Saad: 43-4) Allah ordered him to stand up and strike the land with his foot. When he did, a water spring flowed gushed out of the earth from which he drank and bathed. Allah delivered him from his plight and distress. He even bestowed on him excellent health and a lot of money.

Because his wife sold her braids, Job vowed to lash her one hundred times if he regained his health. It is said that Satan appeared to her in the form of a physician and described a medicine for Job. When she told Job, he knew that it was Satan. He swore to lash her one hundred times. When he recovered, he felt that he should not lash her because of her patience and loyalty. Yet, in order to fulfil his vow, Allah says: ***" 'And take in thy hand a little grass and strike therewith; and break not (your oath).' truly We found him full of patience and constancy, how excellent in Our service! Ever did he turn (to us)!"*** Allah ordered him to take a bunch of one hundred sticks and strike his wife with it instead of lashing her one hundred times. Thus he fulfilled his vow and Allah delivered his pious and righteous wife, may Allah be pleased with her. Allah gave reasons for that saying: ***"We found him full of***

patience and constancy, how excellent in Our service! Ever did he turn (to us)!"(Saad: 44)

Many scholars employed such concept in finding a way out of unjust vows and oaths. Ibn `Asakir reports that Mujahid said: On the Day of Judgement, Allah will set Solomon, peace be upon him, as an example to the rich, Joseph, peace be upon him, to the slaves and Job, peace be upon him, to the afflicted.

Job lived for seventy years in the Roman Empire following the religion revealed to Abraham, peace be upon him. Yet after his death, people altered and changed it. His son Bishr took over his father's message after him; it is proposed that he was the messenger called Dhul Kifl. Yet Allah knows best.

THE STORY OF DHUL KIFL, PEACE BE UPON HIM

Concerning the story of Dhul Kifl, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And (remember) Ishmael, Idrees and Dhul Kifl, all (men) of constancy and patience; we admitted them to our mercy; for they were of the righteous ones."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 85-6) Allah also says: ***"And commemorate our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, possessors of power and vision, verily we did choose them for a special (purpose) the remembrance of the hereafter, they were, in our sight, truly of the company of the elect and the good, and commemorate Ishmael, Elisha, and Dhul Kifl; each of them was of the company of the good."*** (Saad: 87)

Ibn Katheer states: The mere fact that he was mentioned along with those messengers is a sufficient proof that he was a messenger himself. This is the most popular opinion. Mujahid claims: He guaranteed to the Prophet of his people to be just when he issued any ruling. So he was called Dhul Kifl.

Ibn Jareer reports that Mujahid said: When Elisha grew old, he wanted to appoint a successor. He then gathered people and said that I would appoint the one who would promise to take up three things; to fast during the day, pray during the night and never gets angry. Someone among them stood and said, "I do this". On the second day, he repeated the same speech and the same person stood and said, "I do this". He therefore appointed him.

Satan ordered his supporters to accompany him, but later he took over the job himself. He came to him in the form of a poor old man at midday (the only time when he used to take a nap) and knocked at the door. When he was asked, "Who is

there?" he said, "I'm a wronged old man." He then received him and listened to him till the time passed and he could not sleep. He told him, "All right, come to me at the court and we shall do justice to you". But Satan did not go to the court. On the next day, he did the same thing and Dhul Kifl again told him to meet him at the court. The old man did not come and went to Dhul Kifl at the very same time the following day. When he was asked, "Who are you?" he said, "I'm the same wronged old man." Dhul Kifl exclaimed: "Did I not ask you to come to the court?!" The old man said: "My opponents are the worst men I have ever seen. If they know that you have held a court session, they may say that they will give me back my property. But after the court, they will deny it." Dhul Kifl said to him: "When I go to the court, come and meet me." He could not have his usual nap on both occasions.

He went to the court but the old man did not come. When Dhul Kifl felt sleepy, he asked his family not let anybody in; because he needed to sleep. The same old man showed up again at that time, but the guard said to him: "Go away." The old man said: "I came to him yesterday and told him my story." The guard said: I have orders not to let anyone in. The old man climbed over a wall, got in and knocked on the door from the inside. Dhul Kifl got up and said to the guard: "Haven I not given you instructions in this regard? The guard said: I am not to be blamed. Look where he came from. He looked at the door and found it still locked as it had been while the old man was in his room. Dhul Kifl recognized him and said: "Are you Satan?" Satan said: "Yes, I have done whatever I could in order to infuriate you." For this reason, Allah called him Dhul Kifl because he ensured that he would assume the responsibility assigned to him. Ibn Katheer states: A similar story was reported by Ibn `Abbaas, `Abdullaah Ibn Al-Harith, Muhammad Ibn Qais and other scholars.

THE NATIONS TOTALLY DESTROYED BEFORE THE REVELATION OF THE TORAH

It is reported that Abu Sa`eed Al-Khudri said: Allah did not send torture whether from the earth nor from the sky to any nation after the revelation of the Torah except the people of the village who were transformed into apes. Allah says: ***"We did reveal to Moses the Book after we had destroyed the earlier generations."*** (Al Qasas: 43) Ibn Katheer states: This verse indicates that all nations which were totally destroyed were before the time of Prophet Moses, peace be upon him.

THE COMPANIONS OF THE RASS

Allah says: ***"And also Ad and Thamud and the Companions of the Rass and many generations between them."*** (Al Furqaan: 38-9) He also says: ***"Before them was denied (the hereafter) by the people of Noah, the Companions of the Rass, the Thamud, the Ad, Pharaoh, the Brethren of Loot, the Companions of the wood and the people of Tubba', each one (of them) rejected the messengers, and My warning was duly fulfilled (in them)."*** (Qaaf: 12-14) Ibn Katheer expalins: These two verses indicate that they had been destroyed.

Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Hasan Al-Naqqaash points out: The companions of the Rass had a well from which they used to get water to drink and irrigate their lands. Their king was very much loved and appreciated by them. When he died, they grieved immensely. Few days later, the devil came back in his form and said, "I'm your king. I did not die, I just disappeared to see how you will act after my demise." People were absolutely delighted. He ordered them to build a wall between him and them and told them that he would never die.

Most of them believed him, and even worshipped him. Allah sent them a Messenger to tell them that this was Satan. Their messenger forbade them to worship him and urged them to worship only Allah the Almighty. His people, according to As-Suhaili, refused to obey him. Rather they rejected him and later killed him and threw him in the well. As a result, the well was drained. So, they were stricken with hunger and drought after prosperity and welfare as a result of their transgression. Their gardens withered, and their houses became uninhabited. They were destroyed altogether. Jinn and monsters lived in their land and no human voice was heard there ever again.

THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE

Ibn Katheer states that they were the people of Yasin. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Set forth to them by way of a parable, the (story of) the Companions of the City. Behold, there came messengers to it. When We (first) sent to them two messengers, they rejected them: but We strengthened them with a third."*** (Yaa Seen: 13) Allah supported these two Messengers with a third one. ***"They said: 'Truly, we have been sent on a mission to you.' "*** (Yaa Seen: 14) We are the messengers of Allah Who orders you to worship Him alone. The people rejected the idea that Allah may send a human being as a messenger and said: ***" 'Ye are only men like ourselves; and (Allah) Most Gracious sends no sort of revelation: ye do nothing but lie.' "*** (Yaa Seen: 15) They further said: ***" 'Our Lord doth know that we have been sent on a mission to you.' "*** (Yaa Seen: 16) Allah knows that we are His messengers. If we lie, Allah will punish us. ***" 'And our duty is only to proclaim the clear Message.' "*** (Yaa Seen: 17) Our duty is to convey the message of Allah and it is He alone Who guides whomever He wills.

Then Allah says: ***"The (people) said: 'For us, we augur an evil omen from you.' "*** They consider their message as an evil omen. They even threatened to revile the messengers, beat and kill them. They said: ***" 'If ye desist not, we will certainly stone you, and a grievous punishment indeed will be inflicted on you by us.' "*** They (the messengers) said: ***" 'Your evil omens are with yourselves. (Deem ye this an evil omen), if ye are admonished? Nay, but ye are a people transgressing all bounds!' "*** Because we invite you to the straight path, you threaten to kill us? You actually reject the truth.
(Yaa Seen: 18-19)

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Then there came running, from the furthest part of the city, a man, saying: 'O my people obey the messengers: obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves), and who have themselves received guidance."*** (Yaa Seen: 20) This man is called Habib and he was a manufacturer of silk. He was a charitable man with a straightforward natural disposition. He argued why it was that people did not worship Allah although He created them and to Him is the final return. Allah says about that: ***"It would not be reasonable in me if I did not serve Him Who created me, and to Whom ye shall (all) be brought back. Shall I take (other) gods besides Him? If (Allah) Most Gracious should intend some adversity for me, of no use whatever will be their intercession for me, nor can they deliver me. I would indeed, if I were to do so, be in manifest Error."*** (Yaa Seen: 22-4) If I worship these gods which you glorify besides Allah, I will thus be a deviant person.

The devout believer then proceeded to say: ***"For me, I have faith in the Lord of you (all): Listen then of me!"*** (Yaa Seen: 25) It is said that he addressed the messengers saying: Listen to my words and bear witness to them before Allah.

Others say that he addressed his people saying: I declare it openly that I believe in Allah's messengers. Consequently, his people killed him but Allah made him one of the inhabitants of Paradise. When he saw such great reward, he said: ***"Ah me! Would that my people know (what I know)! For that my Lord has granted me Forgiveness, and has enrolled me among those held in honor!"*** (Yaa Seen: 26-7) He wished that his people would know where he was so that they may believe and hence attain such great and eternal reward. Allah says: ***"And We sent not down against his People, after him, any hosts from heaven, nor was it needful for Us so to do."*** (Yaa Seen: 28) When they belied Allah's messengers and killed this believer, Allah did not send any other hosts from heaven. Allah further says: ***"It was no more than a single mighty Blast, and behold! They were (like ashes) quenched and silent."*** (Yaa Seen: 29) The exegetes of the Qur'an point out that Allah had sent Gabriel who caught the two sides of the city's gate and sent a mighty blast which rendered them all dead. No one managed to survive.

THE STORY OF JONAH (YOONUS), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Exegetes of the Qur'an state that Jonah was sent to the city of Nineveh. He invited them to worship Allah alone. Yet, he was rejected by his people who persisted in their polytheism and ignorance. He deserted them and invoked Allah's wrath that would befall them after three days.

His People's Regret for Belying Him:

Ibn Mas'ood and others claim: Jonah departed in rage from Nineveh planning to sail away. When his people realized that Allah's revenge was about to befall them, they repented to Him and regretted their rejecting Jonah's call. They headed for the desert with their children and cattle. They put each female cattle away from her youngsters. They invoked Allah, cried and humbled themselves to Him. All men, women, and even children sought Allah's help and appealed to His mercy. It was a dreadful ordeal. Allah, out of His mercy and grace, did not punish them.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Why was there not a single township (among those We warned), which believed - so its faith should have profited it - except the People of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the Penalty of Ignominy in the life of the Present, and permitted them to enjoy (their life) for awhile."*** (Yoonus: 98) This verse indicates that there had not been any city where people all believed in their messenger. This never happened except with the people of Jonah. In this regard, Allah says: ***"Never did We send a Warner to a population, but the wealthy ones among them said: 'We believe not in the (Message) with which ye have been sent.' "*** (Saba': 34)

Exegetes of the Qur'an are of different opinions as to whether their belief will save them from the torment of the Hereafter as it did in this world. Ibn Katheer maintains that the context indicates that they will be saved as Allah says: ***"And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more, and they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while."*** (Yoonus: 98) This indicates that they will be saved from the torture of the Hereafter. Undoubtedly, his people were more than one hundred thousand. Some scholars maintain that they were one hundred and ten thousand, while others propose that they were one hundred and twenty thousand. There are other opinions as well.

Jonah's Story with the Whale:

When Jonah departed in anger because of his people, he headed for the sea and sailed on a ship. The ship was heavily laden and encountered tough and bad weather. Travelers aboard the ship agreed to cast lots and throw one of them in the water in order to lighten the weight. The lot fell on Jonah but they refused to cast him off. They repeated the lot over and over again, and again it fell on him for that was Allah's will. Allah says: ***"So also was Jonah among those sent (by Us). When he ran away (like a slave from captivity) to the ship (fully) laden, he (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned: then the big fish did swallow him, and he had done acts worthy of blame."*** (Al Saaffaat: 139-42)

When the lot fell on him, he was finally cast off. Jonah was then swallowed by a big whale. Allah ordered the whale not to eat his flesh or break his bones. The whale toured all the seas of the world. When Jonah settled inside the whale, he thought that he was dead. However, when he tried to move some of his limbs, he realized that he was still alive. He

prostrated himself to Allah and said: O Lord! I have worshipped you in a place where nobody else had ever worshipped You before.

The Qur'an scholars hold different opinions as regards the period he stayed inside the whale. Qatadah proposes that he stayed there for three days while Ja`afar As-Sadiq maintains that the period he spent inside the whale was seven days. There are other opinions as well.

Allah says: ***"And remember Dhu al Nun, when he departed in wrath: he imagined that We had no power over him! But he cried through the depths of darkness."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 87) Ibn `Abbaas and other Companions state that it was the darkness inside the whale, that of the sea and the night. Then, he said: ***"There is no god but Thou: Glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong."*** When the whale took him to the bottom of the sea, Jonah heard the whales glorify Allah. He even heard the pebbles glorify the Lord whereupon he said this invocation.

Allah says: ***"So, We listened to him; and delivered him from distress; and thus do We deliver those who have faith."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 88) Ibn Jareer reports that S`ad Ibn Abi Waqqaas reported that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The Holy Name of Allah upon which He accepts the invocation and grants His graces is mentioned in Jonah's invocation. S`ad said: Is this applicable to Jonah alone or to any other Muslim? The Prophet said: It is for Jonah specially and the believers generally if they invoke Allah. Have not you heard Allah's verse:* ***"But he cried through the depths of darkness.'There is no Allah but You, glory be to You. I was indeed wrong.' So, We listened to him: and delivered him from distress; and thus do We deliver those who have faith."*** *Whoever invokes Allah with this supplication, Allah will accept it."*

Allah also says: ***"Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah, he would certainly have remained inside the Fish till the Day of Resurrection."*** (Al Saaffaat:143-4) Jonah's glorification and remembrance of Allah, his repentance and returning back to Him saved him from staying inside the whale until The Day of Judgement where he would have been resurrected from. It is also said that unless Jonah had frequently prayed and remembered Allah before the whale swallowed him, he would have stayed inside the whale until The Day of Judgement.

Allah the Almighty says: ***"But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness, and We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the Gourd kind."*** (Al Saaffaat: 145-6) He was cast off in a barren place and felt so sick as if he had been " a featherless chicken", as Ibn Mas`ood puts it. The gourd has soft leaves and its shade covers a large area of its body. Besides, flies never come near it. It may be eaten raw or cooked. It is also said that Allah ordered a female mamema to come to Jonah each morning and evening so that he would suck its milk. This is one of the signs of Allah's grace and mercy to Jonah.

Allah proceeds to say: ***"So, We listened to him; and delivered him from distress; and thus do We deliver those who have faith."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 88) Allah saved him from distress and He will do so with every believer who invokes Him. Imam Ahmad states that Sa`d Ibn Abi Waqqaas said: I have passed by `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan while he was in the mosque. He caught sight of me but he did not answer my greeting. I asked `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab in amazement, "O Prince of the Believers, has any extraordinary event happened?" He replied, "No." I inquired, "I have passed by `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan while he was in the mosque. He caught sight of me but he did not reply

to my greeting." `Umar summoned `Uthmaan and asked him, "Why did you not reply to the greeting of your brother?" `Uthmaan said, "I had not done so. But Sa`d swore that he did. Then `Uthmaan remembered and said, "Oh, I ask Allah for forgiveness and repent unto Him. You passed by me while I was trying to remember a saying which I had heard Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, say. Whenever I try to remember it, I can hardly notice any passer-by. Then Sa`d said, I remember it. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned an invocation, but a Bedouin came and interrupted him. When the Prophet went home, I followed him. I was afraid that he might reach home before I caught up with him. I did strike my foot on the ground. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, turned to me and asked, "Is it Abu Is-haaq? I answered, "Yes." Then he inquired, "What do you want?" Sa`d answered, "You started mentioning an invocation when the Bedouin interrupted you." The Prophet said: "*Yes, it is the invocation which Jonah repeated when he was inside the whale;* ***'There is no Allah but You, glory be to You. I was indeed wrong.'*** *If a Muslim invokes Allah uttering this supplication, Allah will accept his invocation.*" (Reported by At-Tirmidhi and An-Nasaa'i)

Allah further says: ***"But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness, and We caused to grow, over him, a spreading plant of the Gourd kind, and We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more, and they believed; so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while."*** (Al Saaffaat: 145-8)

After coming out of the whale, Jonah may have been ordered to return back to the people to whom he was originally sent. They all believed in him, though Al-Baghawi reports that he was sent to other people after coming out of the whale. Yet, Allah knows best.

THE STORY OF MOSES (MOOSA), PEACE BE UPON HIM

His Call to Pharaoh:

Ibn Katheer states: His full name is Moses, son of `Umraan, son of Qaheth, son of Azer, son of Lawa, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, peace be upon all of them. His story was mentioned repeatedly in the Glorious Qur'an.

The Prophecy of the Birth of Moses:

Allah the Almighty says: *"Ta Sin Mim, these are the Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear. We rehearse to thee some of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in Truth for people who believe. Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections, depressing a small group among them; their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females; for he was indeed a maker of mischief. And we wished to be Gracious to those who were being depressed on the land. To make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs, to establish a firm place for them in the land, and to show Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts at their hands the very things against which they were taking precautions."* (Al Qasas: 1-6)

Here Allah the Almighty reveals the situation before the birth of Moses. Pharaoh and his clique were intoxicated with pride of race and material civilization and grievously oppressed the Israelites. Pharaoh decreed that all male sons born to his Israelite subjects should be killed and the females kept for the pleasure of Egyptians. Moses was miraculously saved as will be related shortly.

The reason why Pharaoh did so was that he learned that the Israelites were awaiting the birth of a child who would redeem them and bring about the destruction of Pharaoh and his supporters. What Pharaoh wished for was to crush them. But Allah's plan was to protect them as they were weak and to make them leaders in faith. In this regard, Allah the Almighty says: ***"And we made a people considered weak (and of no account), inheritors of lands in both East and West - lands whereon We sent down Our blessings. The fair promise of thy Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because they had patience and constancy, and We leveled to the ground the Great Works and fine Buildings which Pharaoh and His people erected (with such pride)"*** (Al A`raaf: 137)

Allah, Exalted be He, also says: ***"So We expelled them from gardens, springs, treasures, and every kind of honorable position. Thus it was, but We made the Children of Israel inheritors of such things."*** (Al Shu`ara': 57-9) Pharaoh took every possible care not to leave a male child alive among Israelites. Egyptian midwives had orders to kill Israelite male newborns. According to Allah's plan, though, Moses was saved in an amazing way and, ironically, it was in the house of Pharaoh that Moses was brought up!

Moses Is Brought up by His Enemy:

The story then goes on as Allah the Almighty recounts: ***"So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: 'suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve; for We shall restore him to thee and We shall make him one of Our messengers.' Then the people of Pharaoh picked him up (from the river): (it was intended) that (Moses) should be to them an adversary and a cause of sorrow, for Pharaoh and Haman and (all) their hosts***

were men of sin. The wife of Pharaoh said: '(Here is a joy) of the eye, for me and for thee; slay him not. It may be that he will be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.' And they perceived not (what they were doing)." (Al Qaṣaṣ: 7-8)

Here we are told about the situation of the mother of Moses. Signs of pregnancy did not clearly show on her. When she gave birth to the baby she was inspired with the idea that if she feared that the baby could be spotted, she was to put him in a basket and throw it into the river as their house was just by the Nile. Moses' mother actually did and once she left the basket untied and it floated until it reached the Pharaoh's palace where the basket along with the baby were picked up. It was here that the Hand of Providence was at work. The wicked may unsuspectingly ensnare themselves by fostering the very man who was to bring about their demolition and the instrument of their punishment or (to look at things from their perspective) the one man who would learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians in order to expose aspects of hollowness and evil in it.

Once Pharaoh's wife saw the baby, she loved him very much and urged her husband not to kill him. Since they had no sons, she suggested that they could bring him up so that he might became a good son of theirs in the future. Allah says: ***"The wife of Pharaoh said: '(Here is) a joy of the eye, for me and for thee: Slay him not. It may be that he will be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.' And they perceived not (what they were doing)!"*** (Al Qaṣaṣ: 9) Allah the Almighty then says: ***"And there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses: she was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her heart (with faith), so that she might remain a (firm) believer. And she said to the sister (of Moses) 'Follow him', so she (the sister) watched him from a distance in the character of a stranger. And they knew not.***

And We ordained that he refused suck at first, until (his sister came up and) said: 'Shall I point out to you the people of a house that will nourish and bring him up for you and be sincerely attached to him?" (Al Qasas: 10-12)

The mother's heart was void on parting with her son; but her faith in Allah kept her from betraying the secret. Allah saw to it that Moses got the benefit of his mother's milk as well as the prestige and the opportunities of being brought up in the Pharaoh's palace, with the best teachers to teach him Egyptian wisdom. Allah says: ***"Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true: but most of them do not know."*** (Al Qasas: 13)

Having comforted Moses' mother, we realize that Allah always honors His promises, but short-sighted people fail to understand that Allah's wisdom, power, and goodness are far more comprehensive than any little plans they may have. Allah refers to this incident when he addresses Moses as follows: ***"And indeed We conferred a favor on thee another time (before), behold, We sent to thy mother, by inspiration, the message: 'throw (the child) into the chest, and throw (the chest) into the river; the river will cast him up on the bank and he will be taken up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him: but I cast (the garment of) love over thee from Me and (this) in order that thou mayest be reared under My eye, behold! your sister goeth forth and saith: 'shall I show you one who will nurse and rear the (child)?' So We brought you back to thy mother, that her eye might be cooled and she should not grieve. Then thou didst slay a man, but We saved thee from trouble, and We tried thee in various ways"*** (Taa Haa: 37-40) Details mentioned in the latter part of these verses shall be dealt with later. The story then goes on and Allah the

Almighty says: *"When he reached full age, and was firmly established (in life), We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge; for thus do We reward those who do good."* (Al Qasas: 14)

The Story of Moses with the Israelite and the Copt:

Ibn Katheer states: Allah then mentions the reason why Moses left Egypt and headed for the land of Madyan and his story there. Allah said: *"and he entered the City at a time when its people were not watching and he found there two men fighting - one of his own people, and the other of his foe. Now the man of his own people appealed to him against his foe, and Moses struck him with his fist and made an end of him. He said: 'This is a work of Evil (Satan); for he is an enemy that manifestly misleads.' He prayed: 'O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! do Thou then forgive me!' So (Allah) forgave him: For He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. He said: 'O my Lord! for that Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace on me, never shall I be a help to those who sin!"* (Al Qasas: 15-17)

When Moses entered the city, it might have been either during the noon siesta, when all business was suspended, or at during the night, when people were usually asleep. His objective was apparently to strike The Copt so as to release the Israelite, but not to kill the Copt. However, he ended up killing the Copt. This was unfortunate in numerous aspects. He was full of regret and repentance and he prayed to Allah to absolve him of his sin and was forgiven. He then took a conscious and solemn vow to dedicate himself to Allah, and to do nothing that may in any way assist those who were doing wrong.

Allah then says: *"So he saw the morning, in the city,*

looking about, in a state of fear, when behold, the man who had, the day before, sought his help called aloud for his help (again). Moses said to him: 'Thou art truly, it is clear, a quarrelsome fellow!' Then, when he decided to lay hold of the man who was an enemy to both of them, that man said: 'O Moses! is it thy intention to slay me as thou slewest a man yesterday? Thy intention is none other than to become a powerful violent man in the land, and not to be one who sets things right!" (Al Qasas: 17-18) Here the same Israelite asked Moses again to help him against another Copt. Moses was exasperated at this second appeal to him. Moses thought that the Copt was actually unjust, yet was going to intervene again. He received a double warning one from the Copt who was fighting (it was proposed that the Israelite was the one who accused Moses of bad intentions as he thought that Moses was going to kill him because he was the source of trouble) and the other from some man who was friendly to him as explained by the verses. But it is strongly argued that the Copt was the one who said to Moses, Are you going to kill me, too? You are nothing but a bully though you talk of setting things right! Shortly afterwards, a man came from the furthest end of the city and advised Moses to run away. Apparently rumors had reached the palace, a council had been held and the death of Moses had been suggested.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"and there came a man, running, from the furthest end of the City. He said: 'O Moses! The Chiefs are taking counsel together about thee, to slay thee, so get thee away, for I do give thee sincere advice."* (Al Qasas: 20)

Moses' Escape from Pharaoh and His Followers:

Allah the Almighty says: *"He therefore, got away*

therefrom, looking about, in a state of fear. He prayed: 'O my lord! save me from people given to wrong doing.' Then, when he turned his face towards (the land of) Madyan, he said: 'I do hope that my Lord will show me the smooth and straight Path.' And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan, he found there a group of men watering (their flocks), and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks). He said: 'What is the matter with you?' They said: 'We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks): and our father is a very old man.' So he watered (their flocks) for them; then he turned back to the shade, and said: 'O my Lord! truly am I in (desperate) need of any good that thou dost send me." (Al Qasas: 21-4) Now Moses ran away from Egypt and made for Madyan. It was the city of the companions of the wood - the people of prophet Shu`aib. They were demolished long before the time of Moses. Moses arrived at an oasis in the desert, weary and worn-out, anxiety and uncertainty weighing heavily on his mind owing to his recent experience in Egypt. At the well or spring, he found shepherds watering their flocks. He noticed two women waiting to water their flocks. They were humble maidens and in few words they briefed him on the whole situation; our father is a very old man, and therefore he cannot come to water the flocks. We therefore have to do the job; but we cannot push our way among these men. Chivalrous as Moses was, he watered the flocks for them. The maidens gratefully thanked him and he headed for the shade and prayed for Allah's help.

Allah, Exalted be He, then says: *"Afterwards one (of the damsels) came (back) to him, walking bashfully. She said: 'My father invites thee that he may reward thee for having watered (our flocks) for us.' So when he came to him and narrated the story, he said: 'Fear thou not: (well) hast thou*

escaped from unjust people. Said one (of the damsels) : 'O my (dear) father! engage him on wages, truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty.' He said: 'I intend to wed one of these my daughters to thee on condition that thou serve me for eight years, but if thou complete ten years it will be (grace) from thee. But I intend not to place thee under a difficulty; thou wilt find me, indeed, if Allah wills, one of the righteous.' He said: 'Be that (the agreement) between me and thee whichever of the two terms I fulfill, let there be no ill-will to me. Be Allah a witness to what we say." (Al Qaṣaṣ: 25-8) It seems that the two maidens heard Moses when he was praying for Allah's help. When they went back, they told their father all about what happened. He sent one of them to fetch Moses so that he may thank him personally and give repay him for his kindness. It is proposed that this old man was prophet Shu`aib. Others maintain that his name was Shu`aib, but he was not the prophet. Also it is suggested that he was his cousin, but others still claim that he was one of those who believed Shu`aib.

Moses went to meet the old man and the two men got to be friends at once. Moses told him his story; who he was, how he was brought up, and what misfortunes made him quit Egypt. The man assured him that he would be more than welcome and safe under his roof. However, a guest cannot stay forever. Besides, they all wished him to stay with them permanently. One of the girls asked her father, Why do you not employ him to tend the flocks? The father was old and a young man was needed to look after the flocks. Strong and trusty; Moses had proved to be exactly what they needed. Moses was pleased when the old man proposed to marry him one of his daughter, and in return he should work for him for a period of eight or ten years. Moses thus accepted right away.

Allah's Discourse with Moses:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Now when Moses had fulfilled the term, and was traveling with his family, he perceived a fire in the direction of Mount Tur. He said to his family: 'Tarry ye, I perceive a fire; I hope to bring you from there some information, or a burning firebrand, that ye may warm yourselves.' But when he came to the (Fire), he was called from the right bank of the valley, from a tree in hallowed ground; 'O Moses! Verily I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Now do thou throw thy rod!' But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it had been snake, he turned back in retreat, and retraced not his steps; 'O Moses' (it was said) 'draw near, and fear not: for thou art of those who are secure. Move thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain (or harm) and draw thy hand close to thy side (to guard) against fear, those are the two credentials from thy lord to Pharaoh and his Chiefs: for truly they are a people rebellious and wicked."*** (Al Qasas: 29-32)

Now it was said that when Moses fulfilled the longer term working for the old man for eight years, he missed his people there in Egypt, so, he wanted to visit them. He took his family and headed for Egypt. However, along the journey, he lost his way on a cold dark night. He saw a fire as mentioned in the verse. When he came closer, he saw a blazing fire inside a bright green bush, quite a strange scene that dazzled him. He was traveling in the Sinai desert with his family. Seeking ordinary light, he came upon a light which brought him in contact with the highest signs of Allah. Moses was now in an entirely new world. What he had taken to be an ordinary fire was a gleam of the Heavenly Light. His own rod staff was no longer the dead piece of wood that supported him. The staff which became as alive as a snake frightened him; yet it was to

be his own tool in his new mission. All fear was to be cast out of his mind, as befitted a man chosen by Allah. The other sign was the hand. He was ordered to put his hand into his bosom. The hand came out white and radiant, without a stain. Ordinarily if the skin turns white, it is a sign of disease or leprosy. Here it was the opposite. It was a sign of radiance and glory from the Higher Light.

Moses' Confrontation with Pharaoh:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"He (Moses) said: 'O my lord! I have slain a man among them, and I fear lest they slay me. And my brother Aaron - is more eloquent in speech than I; so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me: for I fear that they may accuse me of falsehood.' He said: 'We will certainly strengthen thy arm through thy brother, and invest you both with authority, so they shall not be able to touch you: with Our Signs shall ye triumph - you two as well as those who follow you."*** (Al Qasas: 33-5)

As a matter of fact, the previous scene as well as this one both denote a very important turning point in Moses' life. They represent Moses' transition to prophethood. He was ordered to go to Pharaoh, from whom he had escaped, to deliver Allah's message. He was given some signs to strengthen his call because Moses had an impediment in his speech because of some incident that happened to him in childhood. It is reported that when he was a young child, it happened that he once meddled with Pharaoh's beard. He (Pharaoh) got very exasperated and was about to kill Moses. But he was told that the child was still very young and could not differentiate between dates and live coal. Thus Pharaoh brought Moses and presented to him dates and live coal to see which one he would choose. In fact Moses was about to choose the date but Allah

sent an angel that made him take the live coal in order to be saved. However, he ended up burning his tongue. To support Moses, Aaron was also chosen to assist him in his mission.

The Argumentation with Pharaoh:

Allah the Almighty says: *"Behold, thy lord called Moses: 'Go to the people of iniquity - the people of Pharaoh: will not they fear Allah?' He said: 'O my lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falsehood: my breast will be straitened and my speech may not go (smoothly): so send unto Aaron. And (further), they have a charge of crime against me and I fear they may slay me.' Allah said: 'By no means! proceed then both of you, with Our Signs; We are with you, and will listen (to your call). So, go forth, both of you to Pharaoh, and say: 'We have been sent by the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds; send thou with us the Children of Israel.' Pharaoh said: 'Did we not cherish thee as a child among us, and didst thou not stay in our midst many years of thy life? and thou didst a deed of thine which (thou knowest) thou didst and thou art an ungrateful (wretch)! Moses said: 'I did it then, when I was in error. So I fled from you (all) when I feared you; but my Lord has (since) invested me with judgment (and wisdom) and appointed me as one of the messengers. And this is the favor with which thou dost reproach me - that you hast enslaved the children of Israel!"* (Al Shu`araa': 10-22)

Here the context shifted from the Almighty's address to Moses to the dialog between Moses and Pharaoh. Of course many other things must have happened, but the Glorious Qur'an refers only to the important events that are directly related to the main subject. The deed that Pharaoh mentioned to Moses was his killing of the Copt, as mentioned earlier.

Pharaoh went on arguing with Moses about the latter's so-called lord from the former's point of view, as the Qur'an sketches it: ***"Pharaoh said: 'And what is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds?' Moses said: 'The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth and all between, if ye want to be quite sure.' (Pharaoh) said to those around: 'Do ye not listen (to what he says)?' (Moses) said: 'Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning!' (Pharaoh) said: 'Truly your messenger who has been sent to you is a veritable mad man!" (Moses) said: 'Lord of the East and West, and all between! if ye only had sense!'"*** (Al Shu`araa': 23-8)

Moses stirred up the wrath of Pharaoh both by putting forward the name of the One True God as against Pharaoh's pretended godhood, and by suggesting that any man of judgment would perceive Allah's majesty. While Pharaoh turned to his people in indignation, Moses drove the nail in further by saying that His God was the God of the heavens and the earth and all between, therefore He was also their God, and the God of their fathers from the beginning of times. Any other pretensions were false! Pharaoh was further perturbed. In reply to Moses' statement that Allah, the one true God is also the God of the Copts and Pharaoh also, Pharaoh retorted sarcastically to his court, Look at this messenger of yours! He seems to be mad. But Moses publicly declared that the God Whom he preached is the universal Lord of the east and of the west. He reigns wherever you go! Moses wanted to draw the audience's attention to the magnificent universe which is created by the All-powerful true God.

This part is very eloquently described elsewhere in the Qur'an in *Surah,* "Taa Haa" as follows: ***"(Pharaoh) said: 'Who then, O Moses, is the Lord of you two?' He said: 'Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and***

nature and further, gave (it) guidance.' (Pharaoh) said: 'What then is the condition of previous generations?' He replied: 'The knowledge of that is with my Lord, duly recorded: my Lord never errs, nor forgets - He Who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky.' With it have we produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle; verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding. From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return, and from it shall We bring you out once again." (Taa Haa: 49-55)

When Pharaoh was refuted, he resorted to threatening as the following verses illustrate: *"(Pharaoh) said: 'If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly put thee in prison.' (Moses) said: 'Even if I showed you something clear (and convincing)?' (Pharaoh) said: 'Show it then, if thou tellest the truth!' So, (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)! And drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders!"* (Al Shu`araa': 29-33)

After he saw the signs, instead of believing in Allah, Pharaoh went on accusing Moses of pulling magic tricks. Allah describes Pharaoh's attitude saying: *"And We showed Pharaoh all Our Signs, but he did reject and refuse. He said: 'Hast thou come to drive us out of our land with thy magic, O Moses? but we can surely produce magic to match thine! So make a tryst between us and thee which we shall not fail to keep - neither we nor thou - in a place where both shall have even chances.' Moses said: 'Your tryst is the Day of the Festival, and let the people be assembled when the sun is well up."* (Taa Haa: 56-9)

Pharaoh stubbornly stuck to his opinion. He accused Moses of producing magic tricks and accordingly asked Moses to appoint a day on which each party could display what their capabilities. He appointed the great day of temple festival when temples and streets would be decorated and people would be on holiday. Moses chose this day to assemble as a large a number as possible, for his first duty was to preach the truth.

The Magicians Believe in Moses:

Allah says: ***"So Pharaoh withdrew; he concerted his plan, and then came (back). Moses said to them: 'Woe to you: forge not ye a lie against Allah, lest He destroy you (at once) utterly by chastisement: the forger must suffer frustration.' So they disputed, one with another, over their affair, but they kept their talk secret. They said: 'these two are certainly (expert) magicians: their object is to drive you out from your land with their magic, and to do away with your most cherished institutions. Therefore, concert your plan. And then assemble in (serried) ranks: he wins (all along) today who gains the upper hand."*** (Taa Haa: 60-64) Pharaoh was apparently taken aback at Moses' appointing the solemn day of public festival. It was said that he gathered the most proficient magicians at that time. Moses warned them that their tricks would stand exposed and their hopes would be defeated.

Allah then says: ***"They said: 'O Moses! whether wilt thou that thou throw (first) or that we be the first to throw?' He said: 'Nay, throw ye first!" Then behold their ropes and their rods - so it seemed to him on account of their magic - began to be in lively motion! So Moses conceived in his mind a (sort of) fear. We said: 'fear not! for thou hast indeed the upper hand: throw that which is in thy right hand: quickly will it swallow up that which they have faked: what they have***

faked is but a magician's trick: and the magician thrives not, no matter where he goes." (Taa Haa: 65-9) Moses and his brother Aaron feared that the skillful magicians might deceive people and convey them to their side. As is the case in this world, the magicians' trickery had a great impression on people, but when Moses threw his rod, the illusion they created ended, and the falsehood of their trick was all shown up. The magicians at once recognized the signs of Allah. They immediately abandoned their past life of false worship and oppression of the weak and confessed the existence of the one true God.

Pharaoh's Threat to the Magicians:

Allah says: *"Said Pharaoh: 'Believe ye in Him before I give you permission? Surely this is a trick which ye have planned in the City to drive out its people: but soon shall ye know (the consequences). Be sure I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will cause you all to die on the cross.' They said: 'For us, we are but sent back unto our Lord: But thou dost wreak thy vengeance on us simply because we believed in the Signs of our Lord when they reached us! our Lord! pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto Thee as Muslims (who bow to Thy Will)!' "* (Al A`raaf: 123-6)

Pharaoh accused his magicians who converted to Moses' religion of having been in league with him all the time and in fact of having been led and taught by him! Pharaoh, infuriated and exasperated, threatened the repentant sinners with extreme punishment for treason and apostasy, by cutting off of their hands and feet as well as by shameful death on the cross as in the case of the worst malefactors. But they remained firm and prayed to Allah for patience and constancy. `Abdullah Ibn

Abbaas states that the magicians were at the beginning of that day sorcerers and at the end of the very same day martyrs! These scenes were described in *Surahs* Al A`raaf (7), Al Shu`araa' (26), and Yoonus (10).

The Drowning of the People of Pharaoh:

Ibn `Abbaas states: When the Copts were defeated in their confrontation with Moses, their obstinacy intensified and their denial of truth grew severer. Allah the Almighty then says what means: ***"Said the chiefs of Pharaoh's people: 'Wilt thou leave Moses and his people to spread mischief in the land, and to abandon thee and thy gods?' He said: 'Their male children will we slay; (only) their females will we save alive; and we have over them (power) irresistible.' Said Moses to his people: 'Pray for help from Allah and (wait) in patience and constancy: for the earth is Allah's, to give as a heritage to such of His servants as He pleaseth; and the end is (best) for the righteous.' They said: 'We have had (nothing) but trouble, both before and after thou comest to us.' He said: 'It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors in the earth; that so He may try you by your deeds."*** (Al 'Araaf: 127-9)

Pharaoh's orders against the magicians were drastic. But his council was not satisfied. The participants appealed to Pharaoh's vanity, superstition and sense of power. If you leave them alone, they said, where will that leave you? You and your gods will be defied. Pharaoh had already, before the birth of Moses, passed a cunning order to exterminate the whole people of Israel. With the aid of Egyptian midwives, all male children were killed and all females were left alive and given to the Copts; with the aim of putting an end to the entire race of Israel. The lesson to draw here is that Allah bestows his gifts on

those who are righteous and obey his law.

The story was recounted from a different perspective elsewhere in the Glorious Qur'an. Allah the Almighty says: ***"Of old We sent Moses with Our Signs and an Authority manifest, to Pharaoh, Haman and Qaroon; but they called (him) "a sorcerer telling lies!" Now when he came to them in Truth, from Us, they said, 'Slay the sons of those who believe with him and keep alive their females,' but the plots of Unbelievers (end) in nothing but errors (and delusions)! Said Pharaoh: 'leave me to slay Moses; and let him call on his Lord! What I fear is lest he should change your religion, or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land!' Moses said: 'I have indeed called upon my Lord and your Lord (for protection) from every arrogant one who believes not in the Day of Account!"*** (Ghaafir: 23-7)

The Story of the Believer from the People of Pharaoh:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said: 'Will ye slay a man because he says, "My lord is Allah?" - when he has indeed come to you with clear (Signs) from your Lord? And if he be a liar, on him is (the sin of) his lie; but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you: truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies!"*** (Ghaafir: 28)

Ibn Abi Hatim reports that Ibn `Abbaas states: Among the Copts, only three believed in Moses' mission; the one who advised him to get out of the city, as mentioned at the beginning of the story, the one mentioned above and Pharaoh's wife. It was related that this man had secretly believed in Moses' mission and when he saw that Pharaoh was about to kill Moses,

he stood up to defend him openly and very eloquently. According to the *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him: *"The best kind of Jihad is defending the truth in front of an unjust ruler."*

The Copt who loved his own people and did not wish them to perish in sin exhorted them saying: Will you kill this man for calling on you to worship Allah? Have you not seen his character and behavior? Do you not see the "clear signs" he displays that bespeak his credentials? Suppose for a moment that he is a liar and a pretender, he will surely suffer for his falsehood. But why should you turn against Allah? Conversely, suppose that he is really inspired by Allah to tell you the truth and warn you against evil, what will be your fate when you incur Allah's wrath? You most certainly will if he is a true messenger sent by Allah and persist in your disbelief.

Allah then says: ***" 'O my People! yours is the dominion this day; ye have the upper hand in the land: but who will help us from the Punishment of Allah should it befall us?' Pharaoh said: 'I but point out to you that which I see (myself); nor do I guide you but to the Path of Right!' Then said the man who believed: 'O my people! Truly I do fear for you something like the Day of (disaster) of the confederates (in sin): something like the fate of the people of Noah, the 'Ad and the Thamud, and those who came after them: but Allah never wishes injustice to His servants, and O my people! I fear for you a day when there will be mutual calling (and wailing), a day when ye shall turn your backs and flee: no defender shall ye have from Allah; any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is none to guide. and to you there came Joseph in times gone by, with Clear Signs, but ye ceased not to doubt of (the mission) for which he had come: at length, when he died, ye said: 'No messenger will Allah send after him.' Thus doth***

Allah leave to stray such as transgress and live in doubt, (such) as dispute about the Signs of Allah without any authority that hath reached them. Grievous and odious (in such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers. thus doth Allah seal up every heart - of arrogant and obstinate transgressors." (Ghaafir: 29-35)

Now the righteous Copt started to admonish his own people very gently by appealing to past history. He referred to the generations of Noah, 'Ad and Thamud and many more who held together in sin against Allah's preachers, but were wiped out for their sins. As a Copt addressing Copts, he referred to the mission of Joseph in Egypt. Egyptians made handsome profits through him, but as a nation, remained skeptical about the truth of what he called for along many subsequent generations.

Allah then says: ***"Pharaoh said: 'O Haman: build me a lofty place that I may attain the ways and means, the ways and means of (reaching) the heavens, and that I may mount up to the God of Moses: but surely, I think (Moses) is a liar!" Thus was made alluring, in Pharaoh's eyes, the evil of his deeds, and he was hindered from the Path; and the plot of Pharaoh led to nothing but perdition (for him)."*** (Ghaafir: 36-7)

There are two points to be noted here:

(1) Pharaoh, in the arrogance of his materialism, thought the kingdom of heaven was similar to a kingdom on earth; he thought of spiritual matters in term of palaces and ladders.

(2) Pharaoh frankly stated that as far as he was concerned, Moses was a liar and that other men less lofty than

himself (Pharaoh) may be deceived by the signs of Moses. Pharaoh's speech shows how his egotism and arrogance brought about his own downfall, and that the evil which he did seemed alluring in his own eyes! His heart was indeed sealed, and his arrogance blinded him to the right path.

Allah then says: ***"The man who believed said further: 'O my people! Follow me: I will lead you to the Path of Right. O my people! This life of the present is nothing but (temporary) convenience: It is the Hereafter that is the Home that will last. He who works evil will not be requited but by the like thereof, and he that works a righteous deed - whether man or woman - and is a Believer, such will enter the Garden (of Bliss): therein will they have abundance without measure. And O my people! How (strange) it is for me to call you to Salvation while you call me to the Fire! Ye do call upon me to blaspheme against Allah, and to join with Him Partners of whom I have no knowledge; and I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again! Without doubt ye do call me to one who is not fit to be called to, whether in this world or in the Hereafter; our Return will be to Allah; and the Transgressors will be Companions of the Fire! Soon will ye remember what I say to you (now), my (own) affair I commit to Allah: for Allah (ever) watches over His Servants.' Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him), but the brunt of the Penalty encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh, in front of the fire will they be brought, morning and evening and (the sentence will be) on the Day that Judgement will be established: 'cast ye the people of Pharaoh into the severest Penalty.' "*** (Ghaafir: 38-46)

The man was calling on them to worship Allah the Almighty, but on the other hand they were calling him to

worship the ignorant arrogant Pharaoh. The wording suggests that there was a plot to kill him, but he was saved as the verses reveal. He clearly put it: No matter what you do to me, you will remember my admonition, when perhaps it will too late for you to repent. For my part, I commit myself to the care of Allah and my faith tells me that all will be right.

The Punishment of Denial:

The most important point to note is that Allah the Almighty did not exterminate the people of Pharaoh except after sending them the messenger supported by a lot of miracles. But instead of submitting to Allah's will, they rejected all the clear signs and miracles as mentioned in the following verses: Allah the Almighty says: ***"We punished the people of Pharaoh with years (of drought) and shortness of crops; that they might receive admonition. But when good (times) came, they said, 'This is due to us;' when gripped by calamity, they ascribed it to evil omens connected with Moses and those with him! Behold! in truth the omens of evil are theirs in Allah's sight but most of them do not understand. They said (to Moses): 'Whatever be the Signs thou bringest, to work therewith thy sorcery on us, we shall never believe in thee.' So we sent (plagues) on them: Wholesale Death, Locusts, Lice, Frogs, and Blood: Signs openly self - explained: but they were steeped in arrogance, a people given to sin."*** (Al A`raaf: 130-3)

Their superstition ascribed the punishment of their own wickedness to some evil omen. They thought that Moses and his people brought them ill-luck. They did not look within themselves to see the root of evil, and the cause of their punishment. So it happens in all ages that people blame the righteous for something which they do instead of searching for their own fault for which they are punished by Allah. In fact,

they displayed definite obstinacy and resistance to Allah's message. As they believed in sorcery and magic, they thought anything unusual was but sorcery and magic and so they were hardened disbelievers.

The reference to the signs mentioned above includes all the signs of Moses starting with the rod, the radiant hand, the years of drought or shortage of water, shortage of crops, epidemics among men and beasts, locusts, lice, frogs and the water turning to blood.

What Moses called on them to do was two-fold: first, to come to Allah and refrain from oppression, and second, to let him take the Children of Israel out of Egypt. At first he was laughed at and rejected with scorn. When the plagues befell the Egyptians, each time they suffered, they promised to make amendment and begged Moses to intercede and cause the plague to cease. But every time it ceased, they went back to their evil deeds until the final retribution came. This is the typical of sinners in all times.

This is illustrated in the following verses: ***"Every time the Penalty fell on them, they said: 'O Moses! On our behalf call on thy lord in virtue of His promise to thee: if thou wilt remove the Penalty from us, we shall truly believe in thee, and we shall send away the Children of Israel with thee. But every time We removed the Penalty from them according to a fixed term which they had to fulfill - Behold! They broke their word. So We exacted retribution from them: We drowned them in the sea, because they rejected Our Signs and failed to take warning from them."*** (Al A`raaf: 134-6)

The intercession of Moses was to pray. Each plague or penalty had its appointed term in Allah's decree. The term was

duly fulfilled before the plague ceased. The intercession meant two things: (1) that Allah's name was invoked and his presence duly called to the mind and heart of the sinner who promised repentance, and (2) that the sinner was given a further chance when the prayer was accepted.

This part of Moses' story was also narrated in *Surah,* "Al Zukhruf" as follows: *"We did send Moses aforetime, with Our Signs to Pharaoh and his Chiefs, he said: 'I am a messenger of the Lord of the Worlds.' But when he came to them with Our Signs, behold, they ridiculed him. We showed them Sign after Sign, each greater than its fellow and We seized them with Punishment in order that they might turn (to Us). And they said: 'O thou sorcerer! invoke thy Lord for us according to His covenant with thee, for we shall truly accept guidance.' But when We removed the Penalty from them, behold, they broke their word. And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people, saying: 'O my people! Does not the dominion of Egypt belong to me, (witness) these streams flowing underneath my (palace)? What! See ye not then? Am I not better than this (Moses) who is a contemptible wretch and can scarcely express himself clearly? Then why are not gold bracelets bestowed on him, or (why) come (not) with him angels accompanying him in procession?' Thus did he make fools of his people, and they obeyed him: truly were they a people rebellious (against Allah). When at length they provoked Us, We exacted retribution from them and We drowned them all. And We made them (a people) of the Past and an Example to later ages."* (Al Zukhruf: 46-56)

Allah also says: *"When Moses came to them with Our Clear Signs, they said: 'This is nothing but sorcery faked up: never did we hear the like among our fathers of old.' Moses said: 'My Lord knows best who it is that comes with guidance*

from Him and whose End will be best in the Hereafter: certain it is that the wrongdoers will not prosper. Pharaoh said: 'O Chiefs! No god do I know for you but myself: therefore, O Haman! Light me a (kiln to bakes bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty palace that I may mount up to the god of Moses: but as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!" And he was arrogant and insolent in the land, beyond reason - he and his hosts; they thought that they would not have to return to Us. So We seized him and his hosts and We flung them into the sea. Now behold what was the End of those who did wrong! And We made them (but) leaders inviting to the Fire; and on the Day of Judgment no help shall they find. In this world we made a curse to follow them: and on the Day of Judgment they will be among the loathed (and despised)." (Al Qaṯaṯ: 36-42)

It is certainly noteworthy that power and patronage may be attained by selfish place hunters. However, when they abuse their authority, they are bound to be exposed. This in turn brings about their fall and puts them to shame. If they manage to escape exposure during their lifetimes, it often happens that the truth comes out after their death, and they continue to be cursed by generations on end for their malicious evil deeds. Nonetheless, all this can in no way compare to the true punishment that will definitely befall them in the Hereafter, when everything will be set right, true values restored, and some of the highest and mightiest creatures will suffer the lowest type of degradation.

The Demolition of Pharaoh along with His Soldiers:

Pharaoh and his followers crossed all lines in dealing with Moses and Israelites. They rejected the message, belied the clear signs and miracles, and even went to extremes in

severely torturing them. As the Glorious Qur'an shows, very few people of the Copts of Egypt supported Moses and believed in his mission. Allah says: ***"But none believed in Moses except some children of his people because of the fear of Pharaoh and his chiefs, lest they should persecute them; and certainly Pharaoh was mighty on the earth and one who transgressed all bounds."*** (Al Qasas: 83) The pronoun "his" in "his people" is taken by some commentators to refer to Pharaoh. The majority of Pharaoh's people refused to believe at that time but the sorcerers believed earlier and so did Pharaoh's wife. If we take "his" to refer to Moses, it would mean that the Israelites were hard-hearted and grumbled even when they were being delivered from Egypt, and only a few of them had any real faith in Allah's providence and the working of His law, and that they feared Pharaoh even more than they feared Allah. But the first opinion is believed to be more likely.

At this time Moses addressed his people as the Glorious Qur'an narrates: ***"Moses said: 'O my people! if ye do (really) believe in Allah, then in Him put your trust if ye submit (your will to His).' They said: 'In Allah do we put our trust. Our Lord! make us not a trial for those who practice oppression; and deliver us by Thy Mercy from those who reject (Thee).' We inspired Moses and his brother with this message: 'Provide dwellings for your People in Egypt, make your dwellings into places of worship, and establish regular prayer: and give Glad Tidings to those who believe!' Moses prayed: 'Our Lord! Thou hast indeed bestowed on Pharaoh and his Chiefs splendor and wealth in the life of the Present, and so our Lord they mislead (men) from Thy Path. Deface our Lord the features of their wealth, and send hardness to their hearts, so they will not believe until they see the grievous Penalty.' Allah said: 'Accepted is your prayer (O Moses and Aaron)! So, stand ye straight and follow not the path of those who know not."*** (Yoonus: 84-9)

Here Moses was given the instruction that they were to build their houses into places of prayer, as Pharaoh would not probably allow them to set up public places for prayer, and they were now to be only sojourners in Egypt. Moses' prayer, in which Aaron joined, for he was always with him, may be paraphrased as such: O Allah! We understand that the glittering wealth of the Copts of Egypt is not to be envied. They are but the ephemeral goods of this life. Further, proud as they were of their possessions, the Copts of Egypt mislead themselves and others and let their pride be their undoing! Turn their wealth into bitterness and cause their hearts to grow hard, for they have rejected You and will not believe until punishment actually befalls them for their sin.

It was said that the Israelites took permission from Pharaoh to go out to attend a festival of theirs. He reluctantly gave them permission but at the same time they prepared themselves to run away and escape his tyranny and oppression. They went out at night and made for Palestine. When Pharaoh learnt about their escape, he was outraged and decided to arrest them and expose them to the severest punishment. Allah says: ***"By inspiration We told Moses: 'Travel by night with My servants; for surely you shall be pursued.' Then Pharaoh sent heralds to (all) the cities, (saying): 'these (Israelites) are but a small band, and they shall have surely enraged us, and we are a multitude amply fore warned.' So We expelled them from gardens, springs, treasures, and every kind of honorable position; thus it was but We made the children of Israel inheritors of such things. So they pursued them at sunrise. And when the two bodies saw each other, the people of Moses said: 'We are sure to be overtaken.' Moses said: 'By no means! My Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!' Then We told Moses by inspiration: 'Strike the sea with your rod.' So it divided, and each separate part become like the huge***

firm mass of a mountain. And We made the other party approach thither. We delivered Moses and all who were with him; but We drowned the others. Verily in this is a sign: but most of them do not believe. And verily your Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful." (Al Shu`ara': 52-68)

These verses relate the story of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt and their being pursued by Pharaoh. Here again there are a number of contrasts; first, the blind arrogance of the Egyptians against the development of Allah's plan, second, the faith of Moses against the fear of his people, and last, the final deliverance of the Israelites against the destruction of the brute force. The above-mentioned verses sketch these contrasts in a magnificent manner. Pharaoh prepared his army and set out behind the Israelites. When he approached them, they were overcome with terror but Moses, sure of Allah's promise, reassured them saying: Allah will protect us. At a very decisive moment when the Israelites were confronted by the sea onwards and pursued by Pharaoh backwards, Moses was told by inspiration to strike the sea with his rod, so it was divided and each separate part stood like a huge mountain. The miracle was twofold; first, Moses with his people passed safely through the sea and second, Pharaoh and his great host were drowned in the sea.

This part of the story was also recounted in *Surah,* "Al Dukhaan": *"We did, before them, try the people of Pharaoh: there came to them a messenger most honorable, (saying): 'Restore to me servants of Allah: I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust; and be not arrogant as against Allah: for I come to you with authority manifest. For me, I have sought safety with my Lord and your Lord against your injuring me. If ye believe me not, at least keep yourselves away from me.' (But they were aggressive:) Then he cried to his lord: 'These*

are indeed a people given to sin.' (The reply came:) 'March forth with My servants by night: for you are sure to be pursued. And leave the sea as a furrow (divided): for they are a host (destined) to be drowned.' How many were the gardens and springs they left behind, and cornfields and noble buildings and wealth (and conveniences of life) wherein they had taken such delight! Thus (was their end)! and We made other people inherit (those things)! And neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them: nor were they given a respite (again). We did deliver aforetime the children of Israel from humiliating Punishment, inflicted by Pharaoh, for he was arrogant (even) among inordinate transgressors. And We chose them aforetime above the nations, knowingly, and granted them Signs in which there was a manifest trial." (Al Dukhaan: 17-33)

This scene is also very elegantly sketched in the following verses: *"We took the Children of Israel across the sea: Pharaoh and his hosts followed them in insolence and spite. At length, when overwhelmed with the flood, he said: 'I believe that there is no god except Him Whom the Children of Israel believe in: I am of those who submit (to Allah in Islam).' (It was said to him:) 'Ah now! But a little while before, wast thou in rebellion! - and thou didst mischief (and violence)! This day shall We save thee in thy body that thou mayst be a Sign to those who came after thee! But verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our Signs."* (Yoonus: 90) Pharaoh's attitude could be described as death-bed repentance. It was forced by the terror of the catastrophe. So it was not accepted in its entirety. Only the body was saved from the sea, and presumably, according to Egyptian custom, it was embalmed and the mummy was given the due rites of the dead. But the story commemorated forever Allah's mercy for his people and His just punishment of oppressors.

Repentance at such moments is not accepted as Allah the Almighty says: ***"But when they saw Our Punishment, they said: 'We believe in Allah - the one god - and we reject the partners we used to join with Him.' But their professing the faith when they (actually) saw Our Punishment was not going to profit them. (Such has been) Allah's way of dealing with His servants (from the most ancient times). And even thus did the rejecters of Allah perish (utterly)."*** (Ghaafir: 84-5)

Again and again were they given chances, and again and again did they reject them. When it was too late, and in fact when it had no longer any meaning, they chose to profess faith. That was of no use. Allah does not accept meaningless professions of that kind. He wants to train and purify our will. For their disobedience and rebellion, they perished utterly.

In fact such attitude is typical of the disbelieves when they are suddenly afflicted with a huge torture as the Glorious Qur'an illustrates: ***"If thou couldst but see when they are confronted with the Fire, they will say: 'Would that we were but sent back! Then would we not reject the Signs of our Lord, but would be among those who believe!' Yea, in their own (eyes) will become manifest what before they conceled. But if they were returned, they would certainly relapse to the things they were forbidden, for they are indeed liars."*** (Al An`am: 27-8)

In the *Hadith* related by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that when Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, came to Medina, he found that the Jews fast on the day of 'Ashuraa (the tenth of Muharram according to the Hijri calendar), in commemoration of the day on which Allah saved Moses from the clutches of Pharaoh and drowned the latter. The Prophet said: *"You (Muslims) are much closer to Moses than them (the Jews), so fast on this day."*

The Punishment of the Children of Israel in the Wilderness:

Allah the Almighty says: *"We took the children of Israel (with safety) across the sea. They came upon a people devoted entirely to some idols they had. They said: 'O Moses! Fashion for us a god like unto the gods they have.' He said: 'Surely ye are a people without knowledge. As to these folk - the cult they are in is but a fragment of a ruin, and vain is the (worship) which they practise.' He said: 'Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah Who hath who has endowed you with gifts above the nations?' And remember We rescued you from Pharaoh's people, who afflicted you with the worst of penalties, who slew your male children and saved alive your females: In that was a momentous trial from your lord."* (Al A`raaf: 138-41)

When the Israelites at last escaped from Egypt, and were pursued by Pharaoh and his host, the Israelites were able to crossed the sea with the aid of a miracle, and the host of Pharaoh was drowned. After that the Israelites came across some people who were idolaters. This was a trial along the path of the Israelites whom ages of slavery in Egypt had debased causing them to sink in ignorance and superstition. They asked Moses to set up for them idols as gods similar to the idols of those people. Moses was shocked by such a naive idea and reproached them strongly saying, You, who have been rescued from bondage in Egypt, do you hanker after the bondage of a dead cult that is even more debased than the that from which you have been rescued?

The verses below refers to the events that took place after the Israelites departed from Egypt. They were at the borders of Palestine. At this time, this area was inhabited by people called Amalekites. They were transgressors, unjust and

wrongdoers. Moses ordered them to fight these people but they refused. Allah says: *"Remember Moses said to his people: 'O my people! Call in remembrance the favor of Allah unto you, when He produced prophets among you, made you kings and gave you what He had not given to any other among all peoples. O my people! Enter the Holy land which Allah hath assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown, to your own ruin.' They said: 'O Moses! In this land are a people of exceeding strength: never shall we enter it until they leave it; if (once) they leave it, then shall we enter.' (But) among (their) God-fearing men were two on whom Allah had bestowed His grace: they said: 'Assault them at the (proper) Gate: when once ye are in, victory will be yours; but on Allah put your trust if ye have faith.' They said: 'O Moses! While they be there, never shall we be able to enter, to the end of time. Go thou and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch).' He said: 'O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother: so separate us from this rebellious people!' Allah said: 'Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years: in distraction will they wander through the land: but sorrow thou not over these rebellious people."* (Al Maa'idah: 20-6) They were not willing to follow the lead of Moses, nor were they willing to fight for their inheritance. In effect they said: Turn out the enemy first, and then we shall enter into possession. But in Allah's law, we must work and strive for what we wish to enjoy.

It was said that Moses sent out twelve men to spy out the land of Amalekites. They saw a rich country and it was said that they brought from it pomegranates, figs, and a bunch of grapes so heavy that it had to be carried by men on a staff. They came back and reported that the land was rich and fertile but the men there were too strong for them. The people of

Israel had no courage and no faith and Moses reproached them for that. Among those who returned after spying out the land were two men who had both faith and courage. They were Joshua and Caleb. These two men pleaded for an immediate entry, but their advice as well as the proposal of Moses made under divine instructions were unpalatable to the crowed. Their reply to Moses was full of irony, insolence, blasphemy, and cowardice.

The punishment of the rebellion of such stiff-necked people was that they were left to wander distractedly hither and thither through the wilderness for forty years. Contrary to the attitude of the Israelites with Moses was the companions' attitude with Prophet Muhammad when he sought their counsel before the battle of Badr. Both parts, the immigrants and the supporters expressed their absolute willingness to fight with the Prophet and support him. The comparison between the two attitudes was drawn out by Al-Miqdaad as he put it: By Allah, we will never say what the Israelites said to Moses: ***"Go thou and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch)."*** But we will say: Go thou and thy Lord and we as well will fight with thee.

Hence, it appears that when the children of Israel refused to fight the people of exceeding strength or the giants, Allah destined them for the Diaspora or punished them by the Diaspora for 40 years. During the stay of the children of Israel in the wilderness, many miracles took place, such as endowing them with the shades of clouds to protect them from the heat of the sun, sending manna and quails for their provision, drawing out water for them from the rock, to mention but a few. There the Torah was revealed to Moses, the laws were enjoined and the Dome of Time was built. After Aaron and Moses died, Allah sent Joshua as a prophet to them. It was said that non of

those who had lost their way in the wilderness could get out. They all died during that period, except Joshua and Caleb, as well as their progeny. When the term defined by Allah ended, Joshua took the remnants of the children of Israel out of the wilderness and headed for Jerusalem and besieged it. It was conquered on a Friday. When the sun was about to set, Joshua feared that Saturday, on which they should seek rest, might dawn without fulfilling the mission. So he observed: (O sun!) You are commanded and I am commanded, too. O Allah, defer its setting for some time. Thus the setting of the sun was deferred until Joshua was able to conquer Jerusalem. Allah then ordered the children of Israel to enter the gate of Jerusalem while prostrating themselves and asking remittance of their sins. They instead entered creeping on their posteriors and asked for grains and wheat!

The Vision Issue:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed the (period) with ten (more): Thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord, forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): 'Act for me amongst my people: Do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief. When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, he said: 'O my Lord! Show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon Thee. Allah said: 'By no means canst thou see Me (direct); but look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me. When his Lord manifested His glory on the mount, He made it as dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: 'Glory be to Thee! To Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe.' Allah said: 'O Moses! I have chosen thee above other men, by the mission I have (given thee) and the words I (have spoken to***

thee); take then the (revelation) which I give thee, and be of those who give thanks. And We ordained laws for him in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): 'Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts: Soon shall I show you the homes of the wicked - (how they lie desolate).' Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - them will I turn away from My Signs: even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of error, that is the Way they will adopt for they have rejected Our Signs, and failed to take warning from them. Those who reject Our Signs and the Meeting in the Hereafter - vain are their deeds: Can they expect to be rewarded except as they have wrought?" (Al A`raaf: 142-7)

Ibn Katheer states: Allah appointed thirty days for Moses and he fasted during that period. When the term ended, Moses took a fragrant bark of a tree and chewed it in order that his mouth might be sweet-smelling. Then Allah ordered him to fast for other ten days, making up forty days. Some of our righteous ancestors like Ibn `Abbaas maintain that the forty nights were as follows: thirty nights from Dhul-Qa'dah and ten nights from Dhul-Hijjah. This means that prophet Moses talked to Allah in the day of immolation, the very same day on which Prophet Muhammad fulfilled his mission.

Moses charged Aaron to act for him when it was time for him to go up the mount. He asked him to remain faithful to the divine code and keep things right. Then Moses left to the place where he addressed Allah. Actually, Moses did not see Allah manifestly because he simply would not have been able to tolerate it and when he said: ***" 'O my Lord! Show (Thyself) to***

me, that I may look upon Thee.' "Allah said: *"By no means canst thou see Me (direct); but look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me."* Here comes the proof that what Moses is asking for is impossible. Allah further explains: *"When his Lord manifested His glory on the mount, He made it as dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: 'Glory be to Thee! To Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe.' Allah said: 'O Moses! I have chosen thee above other men, by the mission I have (given thee) and the words I (have spoken to thee); take then the (revelation) which I give thee, and be of those who give thanks. And We ordained laws for him in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): 'Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts: Soon shall I show you the homes of the wicked - (how they lie desolate)."* (Al A`raaf: 143-5)

The Tablets were made of precious stones. They included all the laws of the Torah which the children of Israel should abide by. It was also said that Moses was given the Tablets before the Torah. Yet, Allah knows best. Ibn `Abbaas states: Moses was ordered to abide by the Tablets even stronger than his people. Concerning the last above verse, *"Soon shall I show you the homes of the wicked - (how they lie desolate)."* Ibn Katheer explains: You will see the punishment of those who disobey Me and not live by Allah's commandments.

The Children of Israel Worshipped the Calf During Moses' Absence:

Allah says: *"The people of Moses, made in his absence, out of their ornaments, the image of a calf, (for worship): It seemed to low: did they not see that it could neither speak to*

them nor show them the Way? They took it for worship and they did wrong. When they repented, and saw that they had erred, they said: 'if our Lord have not mercy upon us and forgive us, we shall indeed be of those who perish.' When Moses came back to his people, angry and grieved, he said: 'Evil it is that ye have done in my place in my absence: did ye make haste to bring on the judgement of your Lord?' He put down the Tablets, seized his brother by (the hair of) his head, and dragged him to him. Aaron said: 'Son of my mother! The people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slaying me! Make not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune, nor count thou me amongst the people of sin.' Moses prayed: 'O my Lord! Forgive me and my brother! Admit us to Thy mercy! For Thou art the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!' Those who took the calf (for worship) will indeed be overwhelmed with wrath from their Lord and with shame in this life: Thus do We recompense those who invent (falsehoods). But those who do wrong but repent thereafter and (truly) believe - verily Thy Lord is thereafter Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. When the anger of Moses was appeased, he took up the tablets: in the writing thereon was Guidance and Mercy for such as fear their Lord." (Al A`raaf: 148-54)

When Moses left to the appointed place to address Allah, someone called Aaron Al-Samiri fashioned a calf from gold and threw a handful of dust, which he took from the footstep of Gabriel's horse, into the calf, which made the calf seem alive. It is also proposed that it was turned into a real calf i.e. a calf from flesh and blood. One of the righteous ancestors, namely Qatadah maintained that when the wind blew, the calf moaned like a real one, and people circled it while rejoicing and dancing. The children of Israel even went so far as to say that Moses forgot his Allah there i.e. the golden calf and went to search for an illusion. This was how they perceived things.

They believed what was false and rejected the indisputable truth. When Moses came back and saw what they were doing, he put the Tablets down and started rebuking them for what their evil deed and they apologized. Allah says: ***"They said: 'We broke not the promise to thee, as far as lay in our power: But we were made to carry the weight of the ornaments of the (whole) people, and we threw them (into the fire) and that was what the Samiri suggested."*** (Taa Haa: 87)

Moses afterwards blamed his brother Aaron because he did not tell him when they committed such a hellish deed. But actually Aaron warned them when they worshipped the calf and rebuked them severely, but they did not listen to him. He told them that Allah was testing their faith. Moses blamed Al-Samiri as well because he misled the children of Israel and asked Allah to punish him by having nobody touch him just as he touched what he was not allowed to. Then Moses set fire to the calf. The only redemption for those who worshipped the calf was to kill themselves, said Moses. It is proposed that some of those who refrained from worshiping the calf got out one morning holding swords. A cloudy weather then prevailed and it suddenly grew foggy so that people would not be able to recognize their relatives among the calf-worshippers and would not hesitate to kill them. The worshippers of the calf were thus exterminated. Then Allah directed His servants' attention to the fact that He accepts repentance even from atheists, polytheists and hypocrites. It is because of this that one of the above verses is concluded as such: ***"But those who do wrong but repent thereafter and (truly) believe - verily Thy Lord is thereafter Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.:"*** (Al A`raaf: 153)

Some of Moses' Speech with His Lord:

Qatadah reports that Moses, peace be upon him, said, "O

my Lord, I find in the Tablets a nation who are the best nation evolved for mankind. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil. Make them my people, O my Lord." He (Allah) said, "They are the people of Ahmad." Moses said, "O my Lord, I find in the Tablets a nation who are the last to come but they are the foremost to enter Paradise, so make them my nation, O my Lord!' He (Allah) said, "They are the people of Ahmad." Moses said, "O my Lord, I find in the Tablets a nation who keep their book by heart and recite it while those who came before them used to read their scriptures from papers so if the papers were lifted they would neither remember nor know anything of them. Allah granted this nation, however, a great talent of memorization that He never bestowed on any other nation. Make them my nation, O my Lord." He (Allah) said, "They are the nation of Ahmad." Moses said, "O my Lord, I find in the Tablets a nation who believe in the first Book and in the last Book and fight the remains of falsehood until they fight the one-eyed liar, so make them my nation, O my Lord." Allah said, "This is the nation of Ahmad." Moses said, "O my Lord, I find in the Tablets a people who eat of their gifts of charity. As for the nations who were before them, Allah would send a fire to consume their gifts of charity, if they were accepted, but if not, they should let the beasts and birds eat it. O my Lord, make them my nation!" Allah said, "This is the nation of Ahmad." Moses said," O my Lord, I find in the Tablets a nation who if any one of them has intended a good deed and has done it, it would be written down from ten good deeds to seven hundred deeds so make them my nation, O my Lord." Allah said, " This is the nation of Ahmad." Moses said, "O my Lord, I find in the tablets a nation who will intercede with you on the behalf of each other, so make them my nation, O my Lord." Allah said, "This is the nation of Ahmad." Qatadah said, "It was reported that Moses, peace be upon him, set the Tablets aside and said, "O Allah, make me one of the nation of Ahmad."

Al Mughirah Ibn Sha`bah reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Moses, peace be upon him, asked his Lord, 'Who amongst the inhabitants of Paradise is the lowest in rank?' He (Allah) says, 'The person who would be admitted into Paradise last of all among those deserving of Paradise who are admitted to it. It would be said to him, Enter Paradise. He would say, O my Lord! How (Should I enter) while the people have settled in their homes and taken their shares? It would be said to him, Would you be pleased if there be for you like the kingdom of a king amongst the kings of the world? He would say, I am pleased, my Lord. He (Allah) would say, For you is that and the like of it. He would say, I am pleased, my Lord. He (Allah) would say, It is for you and also what yourself desires and what your eye enjoys." He (Moses) then said, "(Which is) the highest of the ranks of the inhabitants of Paradise?" He (Allah) answered, "I will tell you about them. I establish their honor with my own hand and then set a seal over it (and they would be blessed with Bounties) which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind has perceived."*

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, reports that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Moses asked his Lord (Mighty and sublime be He) about six attributes which he thought that they were restricted to him only and (asked about) the seventh which he disliked. He (Moses) said, 'My Lord! Who fears you most among Your servants?' He (Allah) said, 'The one who remembers (Me) and never forgets.' He said, 'Who is the most guided among Your servants?' He (Allah) said, 'The one who follows (My) guidance.' He said, 'Who is the fairest among Your servants?' He said, 'A scholar who is never satisfied with knowledge but even collects and adds the knowledge of others to his own.' (Moses) said, 'Who is the most honorable among Your*

servants?' (Allah) said, 'The one who forgives while being able to take revenge.' (Moses) said, 'Who is the richest among Your servants?' (Allah) said,' The one who is content with what he is granted.' (Moses) said, 'Who is the poorest among Your servants?' (Allah) said, 'An inferior person who is not satisfied with what he is given and asks charity from others.' "

Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Richness does not lie in the abundance of (worldly goods) but richness is the richness of the soul. Whoever Allah intends good for him, He grants him the richness of the soul, and whoever Allah intends evil for him, He places his poverty righht before his eyes (even if he had a boundless wealth)."*

Abu Sa`eed Al Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reports that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Moses said, 'O my Lord! Teach me something with which I can remember and invoke you.' (Allah) said, 'O Moses! Say, there is no god but Allah.' (Moses) said, 'O my Lord! All Your servants say this.' (Allah) said, 'Say, there is no god but Allah.' Moses said, 'I but want that You grant me a special du`a' (supplication).' Allah said, 'O Moses, were the inhabitants of the seven heavens and the seven earths put in one scale while (the phrase) 'There is no god but Allah' was put on the other, the scale of 'There is no god but Allah' would outweigh them all."*

Ibn Katheer states, The closest to this *Hadith* in meaning is the one reported in *As-Sunan* that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The best du`a' (supplication) is that said on the day of `Arafah and the best utterance that I and the prophets before me may say is, 'There is no god but Allah Who has no associate. All Sovereignty and Praise belong to him and He has Power over all things.' "*

Ibn `Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: The children of Israel asked Moses, 'Does your Lord sleep?' Moses said to them, 'Fear Allah!' Allah (Exalted and Glorified be He) called him, 'O Moses! They asked you if your Lord sleeps.' So hold two bottles with your hands and stand by night. Moses did so and when one third of the night passed, he dozed off until he fell on his knees. He awoke and straightened himself up. At the end of the night, he dozed again so the two bottles fell on the ground and were broken. (Allah) said, 'O Moses, were I to sleep, the heavens and the earth would have fallen and been destroyed like these two bottles which were in your hands." Ibn `Abbaas states, Allah has revealed to his Messenger Muhammad *Ayat Al-Kursi*, the verse of the Throne.

The Story of Raising the Mount of Sinai:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And remember We took your Covenant and We raised above you (the towering height of Mount Sinai) (saying), 'Hold firmly to what We have given you and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein; perchance ye may fear Allah.' But ye turned back thereafter: had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah to you, ye had surely been among the lost."*** (Al Baqarah: 63-4) ***"When We shook the Mount over them, as if it had been a canopy, and they thought it was going to fall on them, (We said): 'Hold firmly to what We have given you, and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein; perchance ye may fear Allah."*** (Al A`raaf: 171)

Ibn `Abbaas and others maintain, When Moses, peace be upon him, came to the children of Israel with the Tablets containing the Torah, he ordered them to accept, take and hold these with firmness. Then they said, 'Spread them before us and if they contained easy commands and prohibitions to be

fulfilled, we would accept them.' He said, 'You must accept what they contain.' They argued with him again and again. Thereupon, Allah commanded the angels to raise the Mount of Sinai over their heads until it seemed as if it had been a canopy and they were told that if they did not accept them and all that they contain, the Mount would fall on them. Then they accepted them and were ordered to prostrate themselves and they did so while looking at the Mount.

So this has became the practice of the Jews until today. They say, There is no prostration greater and more useful than that which delivered us from the Chastisement. Therefore, they still prostrate themselves in such a manner. Abu Bakr Ibn `Abdullah says: When Moses spread out the Tablets, all the mountains, trees and stones on earth then without exception quaked. All the Jews, whether old or young, also quaked and shook their heads. According to Ibn Katheer, the Israelites broke their Covenant and promises after Allah took their Covenant and showed them this miracle. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"But ye turned back thereafter: had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah to you, ye had surely been among the lost."*** Allah's Mercy in this verse signifies sending prophets and Scriptures to them.

The Sending down of Manna and Salwa:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"And remember ye said, 'O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly', but ye were dazed by thunder and lightning even as you looked on. Then We raised you up after your death; ye had the chance to be grateful. And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails, saying, 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you:' (but they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own***

selves."(Al Baqarah: 55-7)

Ibn Katheer states: After Allah mentions the punishment which He raised and that he also raised the Israelites up after the thunderbolt seized them, He reminds them of the blessings He bestowed on them saying, ***"And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you Manna and quails."*** Allah gave them the shade of white clouds which protected them against the heat of the sun during their wandering in the wilderness. As Suddyy said that the Israelites asked, O Moses, How can we live here (in the wilderness)? Where is food? Then Allah sent down Manna. Ibn Katheer points that Exegetes of the Qur'an differed over the interpretation of Manna. Some said that it is food; others said, it is drink. However, the most proper interpretation is that it includes all types of food, drink and the like which Allah bestowed on the Israelites and thus they gained it without exerting any effort. It is also said that if Manna is taken alone, it is food and drink; if mixed with water it becomes a delicious drink and if mixed with another thing, it becomes a different thing altogether.

Ar-Rabie` Ibn Anas claims that Manna was a drink like honey which was sent down to them. They used to mix it with water and drink it. According to Qatadah, it was sent down to them like snow from dawn till sunrise. It was whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. Each of them was entitled to take a portion that was sufficient for him during the day. If he exceeded his share, it would turn bad and vanish. On Friday each would take what was sufficient for him for Friday and Saturday, which was a their feast day on which they were prohibited from all worldly affairs and were supposed to denote it to worship. All this happened in the wilderness.

Al Bukhari reports on the authority of Sa`eed Ibn Zayd,

may Allah be pleased with him, that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The Kama'ah (i.e. a kind of edible fungus) is like the Manna (in that it is obtained without effort) and its water is a (medicine) cure for eye trouble."* As for *Salwa*, Ibn Katheer states that As Suddyy reports Ibn `Abbaas and others as saying that it is a bird that resembles a quail. Ibn Jurayh reports that Ibn `Abbaas maintains that Allah gave them clothes that never wore out or became dirty.

Out of His grace, Allah permitted them good things saying, ***"Eat of the good things We have provided for you: (but they rebelled): to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own selves."*** (Al Baqarah: 57) Ibn Katheer explains: This part of the verse means, We commanded them to eat of what We have provided them and to worship Us. Instead, they rejected and disbelieved in Us. Thus they wronged themselves in spite of the clear signs and absolute miracles they witnessed.

Thus we come to realize the superiority of Prophet Muhammad's Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, over the companions of all other prophets in their persistence, patience, firmness and their being not obstinate. For example, in the difficult days of the *Tabuk* expedition, they did not ask the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, for a miracle which was easy for him, in spite of the fact that they marched in the heat of summer. When they suffered from hunger, they asked him to invoke Allah to increase the food. They collected all the food they had and it only occupied a place equal in size to that on which a sheep lie. He prayed to Allah and then asked them to fill all their utensils. Likewise, when they needed water, the Prophet asked Allah to provide them with water. Then Allah sent them a cloud, and it started to pour heavily. They drank, watered their camels and filled their utensils and looked up at the sky only to find the cloud still hanging over their camp.

The Gushing of the Twelve Springs from a Rock:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"And remember Moses prayed for water for his people; We said, 'Strike the rock with thy staff.' Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs. Each group knew its own place for water. So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth."* (Al Baqarah: 60)

Ibn `Abbaas states: This incident happened during their forty year long wandering through the Arabian deserts. A rock was created for the children of Israel and Musa, peace be upon him, was commanded to strike the rock with his staff. Then twelve springs gushed forth from it and each of their twelve tribes was directed to know its own watering spring to drink from. Qatadah maintains: This rock was from the Mount of Sinai and they carried it with them. When they came down, Moses struck it with his staff. Yahya Ibn An-Nadr points: I asked Juwaybir, How did each tribe know their own watering place? He answered, Moses, peace be upon him, put the rock down and from each tribe a man came. Then Moses struck the rock and twelve springs gushed from it. He splashed them with water each from a certain spring. Thus each man summoned his tribe to that prescribed spring.

The Story of the Israelites and the Heifer:

Allah the Almighty says: *"And remember Moses said to his people:' Allah commands that ye sacrifice a heifer.' They said: 'Makest thou a laughing-stock of us?' He said: 'Allah save me from being an ignorant (fool)!' They said: 'Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what (heifer) it is!' He said: 'He says: the heifer should be neither too old nor too young, but of middling age: Now do what ye are commanded!'*

They said: 'Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us her color.' He said: 'He says: a fawn-colored heifer, pure and rich in tone, the admiration of beholders!' They said: 'Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what she is: To us are all heifers alike: We wish indeed for guidance if Allah wills.' He said: 'He says: a heifer not trained to till the soil or water the fields: sound and without blemish.' They said: 'Now hast thou brought the truth: then they offered her in sacrifice, but not with goodwill. Remember ye slew a man and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime: but Allah was to bring forth what ye did hide. So we said: 'Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer).' Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs: perchance ye may understand." (Al Baqarah: 76-3)

Ibn `Abbaas and others maintain: There was among the children of Israel an old wealthy man. He had some nephews who wished him to die in order that they might inherit his wealth. One of them killed him in the darkness of night and threw his body at the crossroads. It is also said that he threw it on the doorstep of one of them. In the morning, people disputed with each other about the murdered. His nephew, the killer, came crying and complaining about what happened to his uncle. They raised the case to Moses, peace be upon him. He said, By Allah I ask whoever knows who killed this man to tell us. When he found no answer, they asked him to beseech his Lord to reveal the criminal to them.

Ibn Katheer states: When Moses asked his Lord about that matter, He commanded him to order his people to sacrifice a heifer. Allah says: *"And remember Moses said to his people:' Allah commands that ye sacrifice a heifer.' They said: 'Makest thou a laughing-stock of us?'* Their reply implies exclamation as if they thought we ask you about this

killed man yet you command us to sacrifice a heifer! ***"He said: 'Allah save me from being an ignorant (fool)!'*** This means that he prayed to Allah to save him from saying any word that He did not reveal to him and that this command was Allah's response when he asked Him about that matter. Then they asked about its attributes, its color and its age so they were answered with very rare qualities. Ibn `Abbaas points: Had they sacrificed any heifer, they would have fulfilled the command. They however made it difficult for themselves by asking several questions. They first said, ***"Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what (heifer) it is!' He said: 'He says: the heifer should be neither too old nor too young, but of middling age: Now do what ye are commanded!"*** Then they made it even more difficult by asking about its color." They said, ***"They said: 'Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us her color.' He said: 'He says: a fawn-colored heifer, pure and rich in tone, the admiration of beholders!"*** This color was very rare. Then they made it all the more difficult when they said, ***'Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what she is: To us are all heifers alike: We wish indeed for guidance if Allah wills.' He said: 'He says: a heifer not trained to till the soil or water the fields: sound and without blemish."*** After Allah determined it by these qualities and attributes, ***"They said: 'Now hast thou brought the truth: then they offered her in sacrifice, but not with goodwill."*** It is said that they did not find a heifer with these qualities except one which belonged to one of them who was good and kind to his father. He refused to sell it to them except at a very high price, which they paid.

Moses, peace be upon him, ordered them to sacrifice it, so they did though hesitantly. Then he ordered them to strike the body of the dead person with a piece of the heifer. Allah, Exalted be He, says , ***"Remember ye slew a man and fell into***

a dispute among yourselves as to the crime: but Allah was to bring forth what ye did hide. So we said: 'Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer)." As for the piece with which they struck the body, some maintain it was a piece of the leg meat. Others claim that it was a piece of bone beneath the cartilage; and others yet point, it was a piece of meat from between the shoulders. When they struck him, Allah brought the dead person to life. He stood up while his blood was gushing out from his jugular veins. Moses asked him, Who killed you? He replied that his cousin did and then he died again. Allah says: ***"Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs: perchance ye may understand."*** This means that you saw how Allah brought this dead person to life, likewise he will bring all the dead to life at the same hour he wishes. This fact is indicated by the verse, ***And your creation or your resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul."*** (Luqmaan: 28)

The Isearlites' Humiliation and Misery:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And remember when ye said, 'O Moses! We cannot endure one kind of food (always); so beseech thy Lord for us to produce for us of what the earth groweth, its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils and onions.' He said, 'Will ye exchange the better for the worse? Go ye down to any town, and ye shall find what ye want!' They were covered with humiliation and misery: they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah. This is because they went on rejecting the Signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause. This is because they rebelled and went on transgressing. Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."*** (Al Baqarah: 61-2)

Ibn Katheer states: Allah mentions that after He had sent Manna and quails to the Israelites in the wilderness, they still complained at this nutritious and delicious food. So, they asked Moses to replace it with pot-herbs, cucumbers, lentils and so on. They claimed to have ***"one kind of food"***, though they had two, i.e. Manna and quails, because they had the same food daily so they called it one kind of food.

Moses, peace be upon him, answered them saying, Will you exchange the better for the worse? Go down to any town and you shall find what you want! Moses reply indicates that what they asked for was easy for any one to obtain since it was existent in every town. So he did not ask Allah for it. Since their request was unnecessary and implied ingratitude, it was not answered. Yet, Allah knows best.

Allah's saying, ***"They were covered with humiliation and misery: they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah"*** means that Allah ordained that they should suffer humiliation and misery so they were humiliated and insulted by many nations and even humiliated themselves. Moreover, they deserved Allah's wrath. Then Allah explains the causes of their humiliation, misery and deserving His wrath saying, ***"This because they went on rejecting the Signs of Allah and slaying His Messengers without just cause. This because they rebelled and went on transgressing."*** They rejected the truth revealed to them from Allah, denied His clear Signs and insulted the prophets and their followers, belittled them until they finally slew them. What extreme disbelief! They disbelieved in Allah and His Signs and slew His Messengers. That is why Allah overwhelmed them with humiliation in this world and on the Day of Judgement as a fitting recompense for them. Among the causes of their humiliation were their rebellion and transgression as the verse states. Rebellion means committing

prohibited actions while transgression means exceeding all lawful limits. After Allah explains the consequence of disobeying His commands and violating what He prohibited, he shows us that those of the previous nations who did good and obeyed Allah should have a goodly reward. This applies to all those who follow and believe in Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, until the Day of Resurrection. They will be entitled to the eternal bliss and they will neither fear what is to come nor regret for what they missed.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in Allah and the Last Day and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."*** Al-Suddyy maintains: The belief of the Jews consisted of abiding by the Torah and following the *Sunnah* (way) of Moses until Jesus was sent. When Jesus came, the belief of a Jew who abided by the Torah and followed the way of Moses but did not follow Jesus was not accepted and he deserved punishment. The belief of the Christians consisted of adhering to the Gospel and the way of Jesus until Muhammad came. After the Message of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, they have to believe in him so he who does not follow Prophet Muhammad and abandon the Gospel and the way of Jesus deserves Allah's punishment and his belief is not accepted.

Ibn Katheer states that this saying does not contradict what Ibn Abu Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbaas said that following this verse Allah revealed the verse: ***"If any one desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost."*** This is because Ibn `Abbaas

tells us that after Prophet Muhammad was sent, Allah would not accept any action unless it complied with the *Shari`ah* of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Before the message of Prophet Muhammad, one needed only follow the prophet of his age, his belief and actions were accepted for he followed the guidance and the path of salvation. However, since Allah sent Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the last of the Prophets and Messengers to all sons of Adam, they had to believe in whatever he said, obey his orders and avoid whatever he has prohibited. Those who do so are the true believers. The followers of Prophet Muhammad are called the Believers due to their great belief and trust in Allah and since they believe in all Allah's Prophets and also in the Unseen.

As for the Sabians, Mujahed claims that they were people who do not follow either the religion of the Jews or of the Christians, they are the Magians and the polytheists. They remained without a prescribed religion to follow. It is suggested that they are those who did not hear the call of the prophet of their age. Allah knows best.

The Story of Moses and Korah (Qaroon):

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Qaroon was doubtless, of the people of Moses; but he acted insolently towards them: such were the treasures We had bestowed on him, that their very keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men: behold, his people said to him: 'Exult not, for Allah lovetth not those who exult (in riches). But seek with the wealth which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do***

mischief.' He said, 'This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge, which I have.' Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, before him, (whole) generations, which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? But the wicked are not called (immediately) to account for their sins. So he went forth among his people in the (pride of his worldly) glitter. Said those whose aim is the life of the world: 'Oh! That we had the like of what Qaroon has got! For he is truly a lord of mighty good fortune!' But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said, 'Alas for you! The reward of Allah (in the Hereafter) is best for those who believe and work righteousness: but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly preserve (in good).' Then we caused the earth to swallow up him and his house: and he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself. And those who had envied his position the day before began to say on the morrow: 'Ah! It is indeed Allah who enlarges the provision or restricts it, to any of His servants He pleases! Had it not been that Allah was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up! Ah! Those who reject Allah will assuredly never prosper. That home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the End is (best) for the righteous." (Al Qasas: 76-83)

Ibn `Abbaas and many others maintain that Korah (Qaroon) was Moses' cousin. Qatadah claims that Korah had a very pleasant voice while reciting the Torah, but he was a hypocrite, as was Samiri. As he had abundant wealth, he transgressed and was destroyed as a result. Shahr Ibn Hawshab states that Korah had his garment made longer and pranced in it out of pride and arrogance. Ibn Katheer says: Allah mentions that Korah had boundless treasures and wealth to the extent that

their keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men. Allah says: ***"Qaroon was doubtless of the people of Moses; but he acted insolently towards them: such were the treasures We had bestowed on him, that their very keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men. Behold his people said to him: 'Exult not, for Allah loveth not those who exult (in riches).' "*** The trustworthy advisers of his people advised him not to boast of what Allah bestowed on him arrogantly. They also advised him that he should concern himself with seeking the reward of the Hereafter, which is far better and more enduring. They told him that he should not forget his portion of lawful food, drinks, homes, clothes and wives in this world though. This is because a person has to fulfil certain rights, namely Allah's right, the right of oneself and the right of one's wife. Also they asked Korah to be good to Allah's creatures, as Allah has was to him. They advised him also that he should not seek mischief in the land and wrong Allah's creatures lest Allah should punish him and deprive him of what he had given him for Allah loves not those who do mischief.

Korah said in reply to those of his people who advised and guided him to goodness, ***"This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge, which I have."*** He meant that he did not need to listen to their advice for Allah gave him that wealth since He knew that he deserved it and if He had not loved him, He would not have given him it. Regarding this reply and the argument of Korah, Allah comments, ***"Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, before him, (whole) generations, which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? But the wicked are not called (immediately) to account for their sins."*** Allah caused many previous peoples to perish due to their sins and corruption though they were superior to Korah in strength, wealth and offspring. Thus, if what he said had been correct,

Allah would not have destroyed them.

In another verse Allah says: ***"It is not your wealth nor your sons, that will bring you nearer to Us in degree: but only those who believe and work righteousness."*** (Saba': 37) He, Exalted be He, also says: ***"Do they think that because We have granted them an abundance of wealth and sons, We would hasten them on in every good? Nay they do not perceive."*** (Al Mu'minoon: 56)

Exegetes of the Qur'an report that Korah went forth among his people in the pride of his worldly glitter, including great ornaments, clothes, vehicles and servants. Upon seeing this, those whose aim is life in this world and who are attracted by its glitter wished that they had the like of what Korah got. Then when the people who had been granted true knowledge heard their wish, they said to them that the reward that Allah would grant His pious servants in the Hereafter is better than what they witnessed. They added, ***"None shall attain, save those who steadfastly preserve in (good)."*** Al-Suddyy explains the verse as meaning, none shall attain Paradise except those who preserve in good. This was thus said by those who had been granted knowledge according to Ibn Katheer. Ibn Jareer proposes that it means, none shall accept this advice except those who preserve in good. He therefore believes that those words were said by Allah.

Thereupon Allah caused the earth to swallow up him and his house. It was said that he was destroyed because Moses invoked Allah against him. Ibn `Abbaas and Al-Suddyy report that Korah gave an Israeli prostitute some money so that she might accuse Moses of having illicit intercourse with her and say that before the Israelite people while Moses was reciting Allah's Book to them. When she did, Moses trembled with fear

and offered two *rak`at* of prayer. Then he came to her and said, I ask you by Allah Who divided the sea and delivered you from Pharaoh to tell me who forced you to say this? She said, Since you asked me by Allah, it is Korah who gave me such and such to accuse you of so and so. I repent to Allah and ask His forgiveness. Then Moses fell down in prostration and asked Allah about what he should do with Korah. Allah revealed to him that the land would obey him regarding Korah. Then Moses ordered the land to swallow up Korah and his house and the earth obeyed.

It was reported that when Korah with his servants went forth among his people in the pride of his worldly glitter, riding gray mules and wearing purple-colored clothes, he passed with his retinue by prophet Moses, peace be upon him, while he was reminding them of the Day of Allah. When the people saw Korah, they turned their eyes towards his glitter. Moses, peace be upon him, called Korah and asked him, What made you do this? He said, Moses, if you were superior to me on account of prophethood, I would be superior to you in worldly pleasures. If you wish, we would go forth and invoke Allah against each other. Both Moses and Korah went forth among their people. Moses, peace be upon him, asked Korah, Would you like to start the invocation or shall I? Korah answered, Let me start. He invoked Allah against Moses but his invocation was not answered. Moses said, Shall I invoke now? Korah replied, Yes, you can. Moses said, O Allah, command the earth to obey me today. Then Allah revealed to him that He did what he asked for. Moses, peace be upon him, said, O earth, swallow them up. Then the earth swallowed their feet. Then he said, Swallow them up. It swallowed them up to their knees, and then to their shoulders. Moses then said, Swallow their treasures and wealth up. Then they witnessed that with their own eyes. Thereupon, Moses pointed at them and said, Go, children of Lawa. Then

the land swallowed them up totally. Ibn `Abbaas says: They went down to the seventh earth. Qatadah states that it is mentioned that they sink down in the earth one fathom daily and thus they keep sinking deeper it until the Day of Judgement. Allah comments: ***"And he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah, could he defend himself."*** This means that his wealth and servants were of no use to him and they could not protect him against Allah's wrath and punishment nor could he protect himself. Thus neither he himself nor others could defend him. Allah says in another verse, ***" (Man) will have no power, and no helper."*** (Al Taariq: 10)

There were some people who had envied his position the day before when he went forth in the pride of his worldly glitter, saying, ***"Oh, that we had the like of what Korah has got! For he is truly a lord of mighty good and fortune!"*** When such people saw how Allah caused the earth to swallow Korah, they began to say, ***"'Ah! It is indeed Allah who enlarges the provision or restricts it, to any of His servants He pleases!' "*** Thus they began to realize that Allah's granting wealth to a person does not indicate that Allah is pleased with him, for Allah provides and prevents sustenance, enlarges provision and restricts and raises up some people and humiliates others according to His perfect Wisdom. This is indicated by the *Hadith* reported by Ibn Mas'ud, *"Allah has divided morals amongst you well as he has divided your provision. Allah however gives wealth to whom He loves and whom He does not love, but He gives belief only to whom He loves."*

At the end of the story, Allah says: ***"That home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the End is (best) for the righteous."*** As for 'high-handedness', it refers to pride and arrogance while 'mischief' signifies committing sins such as

seizing people's property unjustly and so on. The story of Korah may have occurred before the Israelites left Egypt for Allah says: ***"Then We caused the earth to swallow up him and his house"*** and the house here refers clearly to buildings which are unlikely to have existed in the wilderness. It may also have happened in the wilderness and then the word "house" in the verse refers to the place where a tent is established. Yet, Allah knows best.

Allah has censured Koarh in other verses of the Qur'an. Allah the Almighty says: ***"Of old We sent Moses, with Our Signs and an authority manifest, to Pharaoh, Haman and Korah; but they called (him) a sorcerer telling lies!"*** (Ghaafir: 23-4) After mentioning the story of `Ad and Thamud, Allah says: ***"(Remember also) Qaroon, Pharaoh and Haman: there came to them Moses with Clear Signs, but they behaved with insolence on the earth: yet they could not overreach (Us). Each one of them We seized for his crime: of them, against some We sent a violent tornado (with showers of stones); some were caught by a (mighty) Blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned (in the waters): it was not Allah Who injured (or oppressed) them: they injured (and oppressed) their own souls. "*** (Al `Ankaboot: 39-40) Thus the one whom Allah caused the earth to swallow up was Korah and those whom Allah drowned in the waters were Pharaoh, Haman and their forces.

`Abdullah Ibn `Amr reports, "One day the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned prayer and then said: *whoever guards this prayer, it will be light, proof (of his righteousness) and a cause of salvation on the Day of Judgement. But whoever fails to guard it, will have no light, proof or salvation and will be resurrected with Korah, Pharaoh, Haman and Ubayy Ibn Khalaf."*

The Story of Moses, Peace Be Upon Him, and Al Khadir:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"Behold, Moses said to his attendant, 'I will not give up until I reach the junction of the two seas or (until) I spend years and years in travel.' But when they reached the Junction, they forgot (about) their Fish, which took its course through the sea (straight) as in a tunnel. When they had passed on (some distance), Moses said to his attendant, 'Bring us our early meal; truly we have suffered much fatigue at this (stage of) our journey.' He replied, 'Sawest thou (what happened) when we betook ourselves to the rock? I did indeed forget (about) the Fish: none but Satan made me forget to tell (you) about it: It took its course through the sea in a marvelous way!' Moses said, 'That was what we were seeking after: so they went back on their footsteps, following (the path they had come). So they found one of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught Knowledge from Our own Presence. Moses said to him, 'May I follow thee, on the footing that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which thou has been taught?' (The other) said, 'Verily thou wilt not be able not be able to have patience with me! For how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete?' Moses said, 'Thou wilt find me, if Allah so will, (truly) patient: nor shall I disobey thee in aught.' The other said: 'If then thou wouldst follow me, ask me no questions about anything until I myself speak to thee concerning it.' So they both proceeded: until, when they were in the boat, he scuttled it. Said Moses: 'Hast thou scuttled it in order to drown those in it? Truly a strange thing hast thou done!' He answered: 'Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?' Moses said: 'Rebuke me not for forgetting, nor grieve me by raising difficulties in my case.'*

Then they proceeded: Until, when they met a young boy, he slew him. Moses said: 'Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none? Truly a foul (unheard-of) thing thou done!' He answered: 'Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?" (Moses) said: 'If ever I ask thee about anything after this, keep me not in thy company: Then wouldst thou have received (full) excuse from my side.' Then they proceeded: Until, when they came to the inhabitants of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused them hospitality. They found there a wall on the point of falling down, but he set it up straight. (Moses) said: 'If thou hadst wished, surely thou couldst have exacted some recompense for it.' He answered: 'This is the parting between me and thee: now will I tell thee the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience. As for the boat, it belonged to certain men in dire want: they plied on the water: I but wished to render it unserviceable, for there was after them a certain king who seized on every boat by force. As for the youth, his parents were people of Faith, and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude (to Allah and man). So we desired that their Lord would give them in exchange (a son) better in purity (of conduct) and closer in affection. As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the Town; there was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled; their father had been a righteous man: so thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure – a mercy (and favor) from thy Lord. I did it not of my own accord. Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience.' " (Al Kahf: 60-82)

Some of the People of the Book claim that the Moses who went to Al Khadir was Moses Ibn Minsa Ibn Joseph Ibn Jacob Ibn Isaac Ibn Abraham. According to Ibn Katheer, the

correct view indicated by the Qur'an and authentic, agreed upon *Hadith* is that he was Moses Ibn `Imraan, the prophet of the children of Israel. Al- Bukhari reports on the authority of Sa`eed Ibn Jubair who said: "I said to Ibn `Abbaas, 'Nauf Al Biqali claims that Moses, the companion of Al Khadir was not Moses the prophet of the children of Israel. Ibn `Abbaas said, 'The enemy of Allah (Nauf) told a lie.' Ubayy Ibn Ka`b reports Allah's Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as saying, *"Moses got up to deliver a speech before the children of Israel and he was asked, Who is the most learned person among the people? Moses replied, I (am the most learned). Allah admonished him for he did not ascribe knowledge to Allah alone. So Allah revealed to him, At the junction of the two seas there is a slave of Ours who is more learned than you. Moses asked, O my Lord, how can I meet him? Allah said, Take a fish and put it in a basket (and set out), and where you will lose the fish, you will meet him. Moses took a fish and put it in a basket and set out along with his attendant Joshua (Yusha`) Ibn Nun, peace be upon him."*

Moses said to his attendant that he would not give up traveling until he had reached the junction of the two seas or until he had spent years (his whole life even) in traveling. According to Qatadah, the two seas are the Persian sea in the east and the Roman (i.e. the Mediterranean) sea towards the west. Sufyaan ibn `Uyaynah maintains, When they reached the junction of the two seas, they found a rock. They rested there. Moses rested his head and fell asleep. At the rock there was a water spring called *`Aynul-Hayah* and whoever touched its water became alive. So some of the water of the spring fell over the fish, causing it to move and slip out of the basket and jump into the sea. Qatadah says that the fish never headed back to the sea but it turned frozen. Ibn `Abbaas adds that Joshua said, I will not wake Moses. When Moses got up, Joshua forgot to tell

him. Ibn Katheer states: Allah attributed forgetfulness to both Joshua and Moses in His saying, ***"They forgot (about) their Fish"***, however it was only Joshua who witnessed the fish escaping and forgot in the same way as He the Almighty says: ***"Out of them (salt water in seas and sweet water in rivers and the like) come pearls and coral"*** (Al Rahmaan: 22), though they extract these from seas only according to one of the two opinions.

After walking for some distance, Moses asked Joshua to fetch them their early meal since they were so tired and suffered much fatigue at this point of their journey. Joshua said that he forgot to tell him about the fish when it slipped out of the basket and jumped into the sea, stating that it was only Satan that made him forget to tell him about it. Moses replied that that was what they wanted, since Allah had told him that he would get to meet Allah's righteous servant right after they lose the Fish. They both returned retracing their steps till they came across Allah's servant on whom He had bestowed His Mercy and Knowledge. That man was Al Khadir according to the authentic *Hadiths* of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Then, Moses asked him in a very kind manner, May I follow you provided that teach me something of the Higher Truth which you has been taught?' A learner should always ask his teacher kindly and politely. Moses asked the pious servant of Allah to teach him some of the truth which Allah taught him so that it might guide him. Al Khadir said to Moses that he could not have patience for he would see things which might contradict his laws as each of them was entitled to fulfil certain duties and matters which differed from the other's. He then wondered how Moses could have patience about things that were beyond his knowledge and which Al Khadir was taught the benefit of and intention behind but Moses was not. Moses promised that he would be patient and would never disobey

him. Then Al Khadir accepted his company on the condition that Moses should ask him no questions about anything until he himself told him about it.

According to Ibn `Abbaas, they proceeded along the seacoast so that they might find a boat to give them a lift. Then a new strong boat passed by them. It was the best and most beautiful boat to sail by them. Al Khadir asked its crew to give them a lift and they did. In the *Hadith* narrated by Sa`eed Ibn Jubair, it was added that they (the crew) recognized Al Khadir and said, The pious servant of Allah? We will not get him aboard with fare. Ibn `Abbaas continued, When they got on board and settled there, Al Khadir got out a pickax and a hammer which were with him, chopped down part of the boat until he scuttled it and pulled out one of the planks then patched it up. Moses could not help it and asked, Have you scuttled it so as to drown those in it? Truly a rejected, strange thing have you done! Then, according to Ibn Katheer, Al Khadir reminded him of the condition he agreed on, saying, ***" 'Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?' Moses said: 'Rebuke me not for forgetting, nor grieve me by raising difficulties in my case.' "*** That is why Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The first excuse given by Moses was that he had forgotten."* Ibn `Abbaas states, Then when they both got out of the boat, they proceeded until they came to the inhabitants of a town. They found some boys playing. There was amongst them a boy who was the wealthiest and the most handsome. Al Khadir took that boy and killed him. It was said that he slew him with a knife or that he smashed his head with a stone. Seeing this, Ibn Katheer reports, Moses abhorred it even more than the first incident, saying, Have you killed an innocent person who had slain none? Truly a rejected thing have you done! Then Al Khadir reminded him again of his condition, saying, Did I not tell you that you can have no patience with

me? Therefore, Moses answered, " ***'If ever I ask thee about anything after this, keep me not in thy company: Then wouldst thou have received (full) excuse from my side.'*** "

Ibn Jareer reports on the authority of Ubayy Ibn Ka`b who said, Whenever Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, mentioned someone and prayed for him, he used to pray firstly for himself. One day (when he mentioned Moses), he prayed, *"May Allah bestow mercy on us and on Moses. Had he remained with his companion (Al Khadir), he would have witnessed many strange circumstances, but he said,* ***"If ever I ask thee about anything after this, keep me not in thy company: Then wouldst thou have received (full) excuse from my side."*** "

Then they proceeded after these two incidents until they arrived at a town. They asked the inhabitants of the town for food, but they denied them hospitality. It was said that these people were wicked and miserly. They (Moses and Al Khadir) found a wall which was about to fall down. Al Khadir set it up straight with his hand. According to Ibn `Abbaas, Moses got annoyed at what Al Khadir did and said to him, If you had wished, you could have exacted some recompense for it. Ibn Katheer explains that this phrase means, These are people to whom we asked for food, yet they neither fed nor received us as guests, then you restored this wall for them without asking anything in return. Had you wished, you could have exacted some recompense it.

At that point, Al-Khadir told him they would have to part and that he would tell him the interpretation of the three incidents over which he was unable to hold patience. Al Khadir explained, As for the boat, it belonged to certain men in dire want and they had no other means to earn their living. They had

to pass by an unjust king who seized every serviceable boat by force. I only wished to render it unserviceable lest he might seize it. As for the boy, his parents were pious believers and he was a disbeliever and I feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and disbelief, i.e. their love for him would lead them to follow him in his disbelief. So I desired that their Lord would give them a son who would be far more well-behaved and closer in affection, too. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphans in the town; there was buried beneath it a treasure to which they were entitled. They were children of a righteous man: so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and get out their treasure. Ibn `Abbaas states that Allah preserved their treasure for them owing to the righteousness of their father though it is not mentioned that they were also righteous. According to Ibn Katheer, this indicates that Allah protects the progeny of the righteous and blesses them because of their parents' worship and piety. Then Al Khadir stated that what he did in these three situations was a mercy and grace from Allah to the crew of the boat, the parents of the boy and the sons of the righteous man. He also added that he did it not of his own accord but Allah commanded him and helped him fulfil it. Those who said that Al Khadir, peace be upon him, was a prophet rely on these incidents as a proof of the validity of their view. Others maintain that he was a messenger. However, many others state that he was one of Allah's friends and sincere servants. Allah knows best. That was the story of Moses and Al Khadir. As for Moses' attendant, authentic *Hadiths* have clearly indicated that he was Joshua Ibn Nun who succeeded Moses as a prophet to the Israelites.

The Ten Commandments:

The people of the Book said: When Moses climbed the

Mount of Sinai and Allah spoke to him directly, He enjoined on him the following ten commandments: worship Allah alone, swear not falsely by Allah, observe the Sabbath day, honor one's parents so that your lifetime may be prolonged, kill not anyone, commit not adultery (or fornication), steal not, give not false evidence against your fellow, look not at your fellow's house, and desire not your fellow's wife, slave, slave girl, ox, ass and anything else belonging to him (i.e. envy him not). Ibn Katheer states that many of the early Muslim scholars and others maintain that the content of these Ten Commandments exists in the following two Qur'anic verses: ***"Say: 'Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from: join not anything as equal as Him: be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want - We provide sustenance for you and for them– come not nigh to shameful deeds, whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom. And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength; give measure and weight with (full) justice; no burden do We place on any soul but that which it can bear - whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfil the Covenant of Allah thus doth He command you, the ye may remember."*** (Al An`aam: 151-2)

The People of the Book mention after these Ten Commandments other commandments that they abided by for some time. Then those who were supposed to preserve and establish them disobeyed them. Thereupon, they changed them and interpreted them according to their caprice. Thus they lost the real and true commandments and were left with the altered and distorted ones. This was Allah's Will.

The Merits of Prophet Moses, Peace Be Upon Him:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Also mention in the book (The story of) Moses: for he was specially chosen, and he was a messenger and a prophet. And We called him from the right side of Mount (Sinai) and made him draw near to Us, for mystic (converse). And out of Our Mercy, We gave him his brother Aaron, (also) a prophet."*** (Maryam: 51-3)

Allah the Almighty also says: ***"(Allah) said: 'O Moses! I have chosen thee above (other) men, by the mission I (have given thee) and the words I (have spoken to thee): Take then the (revelation) which I give thee, and be of those who give thanks."*** (Al A`raaf: 144)

It was reported in the two authentic books of *Hadith* that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Do not give me superiority over Moses, for the people will become unconscious (on the Day of Resurrection) and I will be the first to gain consciousness to see Moses standing and holding one of the legs of Allah's Throne. I will not know if he has been among those people who have become unconscious and that he gained consciousness before me, or that the shock he had received at Mount Sinai (during his worldly life) was sufficient for him."*

Ibn Katheer states that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said that out of humbleness and modesty for Prophet Muhammad is the last of Allah's prophets and is certainly the best of the children of Adam and their leader in this world and in the Hereafter. Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Ibn Mas`ud, may Allah be pleased with him, who said: Once Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, distributed something (among his followers). A man said, This distribution has not been carried out (with justice) seeking

the satisfaction of Allah. I went to the Prophet and told him (of that). He became so angry that I saw signs of anger on his face. Then he said, *"May Allah bestow His Mercy on Moses."* The Prophet said so because Moses was repeatedly harmed in a far worse manner; yet he endured it all patiently.

Ibn Katheer states: Allah has mentioned Moses on many occasions in the Qur'an and praised him. Moses' story was repeatedly related both in detail and in brief. Many times Allah's mention of the Book of Muhammad (the Qur'an) is accompanied by mentioning the Torah, the Book of Moses, peace be upon them both. For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them, a party of the People of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs as if (it had been something) they did not know!"*** (Al Baqarah: 101) ***"Alif Lam Mim. Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, the Eternal. It is He who sent down to thee (step by step) in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the Criterion (of judgement between right and wrong). Then those who reject faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest Penalty and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution."*** (Ali `Imraan: 1-4)

In the following two verses of *Surah,* “Al An`aam”, Allah first praises the Torah and then the Glorious Qur'an, saying: ***"No just estimate of Allah do they make when they say, 'Nothing doth Allah send down to man (by way of revelation)': Say: 'Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought? — a light and guidance to man: but ye make it into (separate) sheets for show, while ye conceal much (of its contents): therein were ye taught that which knew not —***

neither ye nor your fathers.' Say: 'Allah (sent it down): then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling. And this is a Book which We have sent down, bringing blessings, and confirming (the revelations) which came before it: that thou mayst warn the Mother of Cities and all around her. Those who believe in the Hereafter, believe in this (Book), and they are constant in guarding their prayers." (Al An`aam: 91-2)

At the end of *Surah,* "Al An`aam", again Allah says: ***"Moreover, We gave Moses the Book, completing (our favor) to those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail, and a guide and a mercy, that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord."*** (Al An`aam: 155)

Moreover, in *Surah,* "Al Maa'idah", Allah says: ***"It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's Will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto. Therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers."*** (Al Maa'idah: 44) The verses go on to explain some of the teachings of the Torah and then speak about Jesus and the Gospel till Allah says: ***"Let the People of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed. They are (no better than) those who rebel. To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety."*** (Al Maa'idah: 47-8)

Thus Allah made the Qur'an, His final word, a criterion to guard all previous Scriptures revealed by Allah. It also

confirms the previous Scriptures but at the same time explains that they were subjected to much corruption and distortion. The People of the Book were entrusted with protecting the Scriptures revealed to them, but they failed to preserve and safeguard them. Instead, they changed and distorted them owing to their misunderstanding, lack of knowledge, corrupt intentions, and violation of their Lord's command. As a result they fabricated obvious, innumerable and indescribable lies against Allah and His Messengers and added them to their Scriptures.

Again Allah says: ***"In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion (for judgement), and a Light and a Message for those who would do right, those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of Judgement) in awe. And this is a blessed Message which We have sent down: will ye then reject it?"*** (Al Anbiyaa': 48-50) Allah further says: ***"But (now) when the Truth has come to them from Ourselves, they say, 'Why are not (Signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses?' Do they not reject (the Signs) which were formerly sent to Moses? They say, 'Two kinds of sorcery, each assisting the other!' And they say, 'For us, we reject all (such things)!' Say, 'Then bring ye a Book from Allah, which is a better guide than either of them, that I may follow it! (Do), if ye are truthful!'"*** (Al Qasas: 48-9) In these verses Allah praises both the Qur'an and the Torah as well as the Prophets unto whom they were revealed, peace be upon them both. Allah also relates what some of the Jinns said to their people about the Qur'an, saying, We have heard a Book revealed after Moses.

Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, related to Waraqah Ibn Nawfal what happened to him at the beginning of revelation and recited to him the verses,

"Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created — created man, out of a mere clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the Pen — taught man that which he knew not." (Al `Alaq: 1-5) Upon hearing these words, Waraqah said, "Glory be to him! Glory be to him! It is the same revelation as was sent down to Moses, son of `Imraan." This indicates that the *Shari`ah* (Laws) of Moses was a great one and his nation was equally great. There were amongst them prophets, scholars, worshippers, sincere servants of Allah, kings, princes and eminent figures. Yet they all perished and were succeeded by others who changed and altered what Allah sent down to them and therefore Allah turned them into apes and pigs. They were afflicted with so many calamities, which are too lengthy to be mentioned in the present context.

Moses' Pilgrimage to Al Aqsa Mosque:

Ibn `Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by the valley of Al-Azraq and asked, *"Which valley is this?"* People replied, "(It is) the valley of Al-Azraq." The Messenger said, *"As if I were now looking at Moses while he was descending down the curve of the valley and loudly repeating Talbiyah."* Then the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by the valley of Harsha' and asked, *"Which valley is this?"* They replied, "(It is) the valley of Harsha'?" He then said, *"As if I were now looking at Jonah (Yoonus) the son of Matta, wearing a woolen cloak and riding a red she-camel, the reins of which were made of fibers of date-palms, while he was saying Talbiyah."*

Ibn `Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, reports also that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him,

said, *"On the night of my ascension to Heaven, I saw (Prophet) Moses, son of `Imraan, a tall, curely-haired man, looking like one of the men of the tribe of Shanu'ah, and I saw Jesus, son of Mary, a man of average height, with red face and lank hair."*

The Death of Moses:

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported: The Angel of death was sent to Moses. When he came to Moses, Moses slapped him on the eye. The Angel returned to his Lord and said, "You have sent me to a slave who does not want to die." Allah said, "Return to him and tell him to put his hand on the back of an ox and for every hair that will come under it, he will be granted one year of life." Moses said, "O Lord! What will happen after that?" Allah replied, "Then death." Moses said, "Let it be now." Moses then asked Allah to let him die close to the Sacred land so much so that he would be a distance of a stone's throw from it." Abu Hurairah added, "Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"If I were there, I would show you his grave below the red sand hill on the side of the road."*

Ibn Katheer reports that Ibn Hibban said that when the Angel of death came to Moses to take his soul, Moses did not know him for he came disguised an Arabian. Also when the angles came to Abraham and Lot, they came disguised as youths and therefore neither Abraham nor Lot recognized them.

THE STORY OF JOSHUA (YUSHA`), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Katheer states: His name is Joshua (Yusha`), son of Afrathim, son of Joseph, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, peace be upon them all. Allah mentions him in the Qur'an unnamed while relating the story of Al Khadir. Allah says: ***"Behold! Moses said to his Attendant"*** and ***"When they had passed on (some distance), Moses said to his attendant."*** As mentioned before, the *Hadith* reported by Al Bukhari on the authority of Ubayy Ibn Ka`b states that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, said that Moses' attendant was Joshua, son of Nun. The People of the Book unanimously agree on his prophethood even the Sammera sect that did not acknowledge the prophethood of any prophet after Moses. Nonetheless, they acknowledged Joshua, son of Nun as a prophet since he was named in the Torah.

Joshua was the one who conquered Jerusalem after he got out with the Israelites from the wilderness. Ibn Is-haaq claims that Jerusalem was conquered by Moses. He mentions the story of Balaam, son of Ba`ura, claiming that it happened during Moses' march towards it. Allah refers to this story saying, ***"Relate to them the story of the man to whom We sent Our Sings, but he passed them by: so Satan followed him up, and he went astray. If it had been Our will, We should have elevated him with Our Signs: but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires. His similitude is that of a dog: if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue, or if you leave him alone, he (still) lolls out his tongue. That is the similitude of those who reject Our Signs; so relate the story; perchance they may reflect. Evil as an example are people who reject Our Signs and wrong their own souls."*** (Al A`raaf: 175-7)

Ibn Mas`ud and many others maintain that Balaam lived in the early Israelite time. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Zayd Ibn Aslam and many others claim that his *Du`a'* (supplications) were frequently answered and Allah used to grant him whatever he asked for. According to Ibn Is-haaq, when Moses reached the land of Canaan in Syria, the tribe to whom Balaam belonged came to him and said, That is Moses, son of `Imraan. He has came with the Israelites to turn us out of our land, kill us and give our land to the Israelites. We are your own tribe and we know that Allah frequently answers your *Du`a'* so get out and curse them for we have no other choice. Balaam said, Woe to you! How can I curse Allah's prophet, the angels and the believers? They said, We have no other choice. They went on begging him until they convinced him. He then rode his ass and headed for the mount of Hasban, on top of which he could see the Israelite camp. When he rode his ass, it lay after a distance. He dismounted from it and struck it until it got up. He rode it and again after a short distance, it lay down. He struck it until he moved it. Then Allah made it speak to him, Woe to you, Balaam! Where are you going? Did not you see the angles before me forcing me to change my direction? Do you want to go to curse Allah's prophet and the believers with him? He did not change his mind and turn back but struck it. Thereupon, Allah let the ass walk and when Balaam reached the top of Mount Hasban, he began to curse them from atop. Whenever he intended to cruse and invoke Allah against them, Allah made his tongue curse his own people. Whenever he intended to ask good for his people, Allah made his tongue invoke this goodness to the Israelites. His people asked him, Do you know what you have done? You have invoked Allah against us and asked goodness for them. He answered, I had no choice for I was forced to do so. Then he said to them, Now I have lost both this world and the Hereafter and I have no other choice but to resort to trickery. You should order your women to smarten

themselves up. Then give them goods to sell and order them not to refuse the call of whoever wants to have sex with them. That is because if only one of the Israelites committed an illicit intercourse, they would not be able to harm you (and they would perish).

When the women entered the camp, one of them passed by a great man among the Israelites named Zamir, son of Shalurn. He admired all the women but was particularly attracted by her. Then he took her and went to see Moses. He told Moses, I think that you will say that she is prohibited to me and that I should keep away from her. Moses said, Yes, she is prohibited to you. Zamir said, By Allah, I will not obey you in this. Then, he took her to his tent and had sexual intercourse with her. Therefore, Allah afflicted them with the plague. Finhas, son of Al `Izar, son Aaron who was their leader then was absent when Zamir did so. He came while the plague was spreading in the camp like wildfire. When he knew what Zamir did, he took his sword and entered the tent where he found Zamir and the woman in a state of sexual intercourse. He then forced them to get out of the tent using his sword and killed them saying, O Allah! That is how we are to deal with whoever disobeys you. Thereupon, Allah lifted the plague.

Ibn Katheer points that the story of Balaam related by Ibn Is-haaq was correct and added that many early Muslim scholars related it. However, this story might have occurred when Moses wanted to enter Jerusalem as soon as he left Egypt. It might also be another story that occurred during their wandering through the wilderness, since Mount Hasban, mentioned in this story, was far from Jerusalem. Anyhow, the majority of scholars agree that Aaron died in the wilderness two years before Moses who died there, too, as he asked his Lord to let him die close to Jerusalem, as mentioned above.

As-Suddyy claims: Allah sent Joshua as a prophet, after the forty years of wandering in the wilderness ended as Allah states in the Qur'an saying, ***"Allah said: 'Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years: in distraction will they wander through the land: but sorrow thou not over these rebellious people."*** (Al Maa'idah: 26) Joshua called on the Israelites to worship Allah alone and told them that he was a prophet sent to them by Allah and that Allah commanded him to fight "a people of exceeding strength" i.e. the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They believed in him and swore steadfastness to him. According to Ibn Katheer, historians claim that Joshua led the Israelites to Jerusalem and seized it until Allah granted them victory on a late Friday afternoon when the sun was about to set. Thus they were to enter it on Saturday, which was their sacred day on which all activities were forbidden to them and which they were asked to sanctify. Then Joshua said to the sun, You are commanded and I am so. O Allah, Prevent it from setting. So Allah commanded it not to set until they entered the town. Abu Hurairah reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Sunset was never prevented for any human being except to Joshua when he marched to enter Jerusalem."*

Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"A prophet set out for fighting, then he said to his people, the following persons should not follow me: a man married a woman but did not consummate his marriage with her while he wishes to do so; a man built a house but did not roof it; and a man bought sheep or pregnant camels waiting for their progeny. He marched until he was near the town (he intended) when he performed afternoon prayer or close to that time. He said to the sun, You are commanded and I am so. O Allah, postpone its setting for some time. Then it was postponed until*

Allah granted them victory. They collected the war booty so that a fire would come and consume it but it did not. The Prophet said, There is dishonesty among you so let a man from every tribe swear allegiance (and shake hands with me). His hand stuck to the hand of a man among them. He said, Dishonesty occurred by (some of) your tribe, so let your tribe swear allegiance (and shake hands with me). Then his hand stuck to the hands of two or three of them. He said, Dishonesty occurred among you. You have stolen something dishonestly. They brought a golden head of a cow and put it among the booty. Then the fire came and consumed it. The booty was not lawful to any nation before us. However, Allah knew our weakness and inability so He made it lawful for us."

When Allah granted them victory and they conquered Jerusalem, He ordered them to enter the gate of the town in a posture of humility expressing gratitude to Allah for the great victory he bestowed on them. He had promised that they would return to their town which they inherited from their father Jacob, peace be upon him. Allah finally guided them after a long period of wandering. Allah also ordered them to say *hittatun* meaning forgive us our previous sins, upon entering the town.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And remember it was said to them: 'Dwell in this town and eat therein as ye wish, but say: the word of humility and enter the gate in a posture of humility: We shall forgive you your faults; We shall increase (the portion of) those who do good.' But the transgressors among them changed the word from that which had been give them so we sent on them a plague from heaven. For that they repeatedly transgressed."*** (Al-A`raaf: 161-2)

Also in *Surah,* "Al Baqarah" Allah says: ***"And remember We said: 'Enter this town, and eat of the plenty***

therein as ye wish; but enter the gate with humility in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults and increase (the portion of) those who do good.' But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them; We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (Our command) repeatedly. "(Al Baqarah: 58-9)

The Israelites changed the command of Allah and entered the town, raising their heads, dragging themselves on their buttocks and said, *Habbatun fi Sha`ratin* (i.e. a grain). In contrast, when Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, conquered Makkah, he entered it, along with a great army of Muslims, riding his she-camel and showing humility and gratitude to Allah to the extent that the tip of his beard touched the back of his she-camel where he was sitting. When he entered Makkah, he took a bath and offered eight *rak'at* (units of prayers) which was a thankfulness prayer according to the majority of scholars.

The consequence of the disobedience of the Israelites to Allah's command was that Allah sent on them a punishment, that is the plague. It is reported in the two *Sahihs* on the authority of Usamah ibn Zayd that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"This decease (i.e. the plague) was a punishment sent on some of the people who came before you."* In the version of An-Nasai: *"The plague was punishment sent on some of the people who came before you."*

Then the Israelites dwelt in Jerusalem. Prophet Joshua, peace be upon him, lived among them and judged according to the Torah, the Book of Allah, revealed unto Moses, until he died at the age of 127 years. Thus, he lived 27 years after the death of Moses.

THE STORY OF EZEKIEL (HIZQEEL), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Jareer states: The scholars of our *Ummah* and many others unanimously agree that the one who succeeded Joshua (Yusha`), son of Nun in leading the children of Israel was Caleb, son of Bufna, one of the companions of Moses and the husband of his sister Mary (Maryam). He was also one of the two God-fearing men namely, Joshua and Caleb who said to the children of Israel when they turned back and rejected fighting, ***"Assault them at the (proper) Gate: when once ye are in, victory will be yours; but on Allah put your trust if ye have faith."*** (Al Maa'idah: 23)

Then Ezekiel (Hizqeeel), son of Yuzi, succeeded Joshua in leading the children of Israel. He was the one who asked Allah to bring to life those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands in number, for fear of death. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Didst thou not turn by vision to those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands (in number) for fear of death? Allah said to them, 'Die': then He restored them to life for Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but most of them are ungrateful."*** (Al Bqarah: 243)

Ibn `Abbaas and others state: There was a town called 'Dawirdan' near 'Wasit'. It was afflicted with the plague and therefore most of its inhabitants fled and went to a place close by. The majority of those who remained in the town perished while most of those who fled survived and returned to their hometown after the plague ended. Those who survived and remained in the town said, The ones who fled were wiser than us. If only we had fled like them, those who perished would have survived. In the following year the town was again afflicted with the plague, so all people fled until they reached a

vast valley. They were more than thirty thousand in number. Then two angels from the upper and lower sides of the valley called on them saying, 'Die!' Thereupon, they all died. Though they died, their bodies did not decay. Then a prophet named Ezekiel passed by their dead bodies. Upon seeing them, he exclaimed, How shall Allah resurrect them ?! Then Allah inspired him, Would you like Me to show you how I can bring them back to life? He said, Yes, I would. Then it was said to him, Call. He called, O ye bones, Allah commands you to come back together. They flew and gathered together forming skeletons. Then Allah inspired him to call them, O ye bones, Allah commands you to wear flesh. So they wore flesh, blood and the clothes in which they had died. Then he called, O ye bodies, Allah commands you to stand. So they stood. Mujahid said: As soon as they were raised up, they said: O Allah! Glory and praise be to you, there is no god but you. They returned to their people alive, knowing that they have been dead, the mark of death showing on their faces. They lived through the end of their prescribed ages. Ibn Juraih reports on the authority of `Ata' that this was set forth as a parable to indicate that caution does change destiny. The majority of scholars, however, believe that this incident actually occurred.

Muhammad Ibn Is-haaq states: When Ezekiel, peace be upon him, died, the Israelites broke the Covenant of Allah, indulged in sin and worshipped idols. Among those idols was an idol called Baal. Therefore, Allah sent to them Elijah, son of Yasin, son of Finhas, son of Al `Izar, son of Aaron, son of `Imraan.

THE STORY OF ELIJAH (ELIAS), PEACE BE UPON HIM

After mentioning the story of Moses and Aaron in *Surah,* "Al Saaffaat", Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"So also was Elias among those sent (by Us). Behold, he said to his people, 'Will ye not fear (Allah)? Will ye call upon Ba'l and forsake the Best of Creators, Allah, your Lord and Chericher and the Lord and Chericher of your fathers of old?' But they rejected him, and they will certainly be called up (for punishment), except the sincere and devoted servants of Allah (among them). And We left for him among generations (to come) in later times: Peace and salutation to Elias! Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For he was one of Our believing servants."*** (Al Saaffaat: 123-32)

Genealogists state that prophet Elias' full name is Elias, son of Yasin, son of Finhas , son of Al `Izar, son of Aaron, son of `Imraan . Others claim that his name is Elias, son of Al `Azir, son of Al `Izar, son of Aaron, son of `Imraan. It is believed that he was sent to people of Baalbek, to the west of Damascus. He asked them to worship Allah and renounce the worship of Baal, an idol. They rejected his call and tried to kill him. It was also said that he fled from them and disappeared mysteriously.

Ibn Katheer maintains: The verse, ***"But they rejected him , and they will certainly be called up"*** means that they will be called up for punishment both in this world and in the Hereafter. In the verse, ***"Except the sincere and devoted servants of Allah"***, the exception is for those who believed in him (Elias) among his people. Thus Allah says in the following verse, ***"And We left for him among generations (to come) in later times"*** which means that Allah granted him good and

honorable mention among the latest generations. Thus he is never referred to except as a good and honorable man. That is why Allah says: ***"Peace and salutation to Elias."*** Elyasin is the same as Elias for, in Arabic, the letter *Nun* (similar to English "N") is added to many names without changing the meaning. This verse can also be recited as ***"Peace and salutation to Al-Yasin."*** 'Al-Yasin' means the family of Yasin, a name of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Ibn Is-haaq maintains, Elisha, son of Akhtub, peace be upon him, succeeded Elijah as a prophet to the children of Israel.

THE STORY OF ELISHA (ELYASA`), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Is-haaq states, His full name is Elisha, son of Akhtub. He succeeded Elijah as a prophet to the Israelites. He called on them to worship Allah and abided by the way and Laws of prophet Elijah until he breathed his last. In the Qur'an, Allah mentions him along with other prophets saying, "***And Isma`il and Elisha, and Jonas and Lot: and to all We gave favor above the nations***" (Al An`am: 86) and "***And commemorate Isma`il, Elisha, and Dhu al Kifl: each of them was of the company of the Good.***" (Saad: 46)

Ibn Jareer maintains: Then the children of Israel deviated from Allah's path, indulged in vice and sin, and killed more and more prophets. Then Allah made tyrannical kings rule, to persecute 'and oppress them and shed their blood instead of the prophets who were their leaders. Likewise, Allah made their enemies hold sway over them. When the Israelites fought an enemy, they used to take the Ark of Covenant with them so that it may grant them victory on account of its blessing, the security Allah set therein and because it comprised the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron. During one of their battles against the people of Gaza and Ashkelon, they were defeated and their enemy captured it the Ark of Covenant. Their king died of sorrow as soon as he learnt the news. Thereupon, the Israelites remained without a leader until Allah sent to them a prophet named Samuel (Shamweel) whom they asked to appoint for them a king so as to lead them in fighting their enemies. The period between the death of Joshua (Yusha'), son of Nun and the sending of Samuel was 64 years.

THE STORY SAMUEL (SHAMWEEL), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Wahb Ibn Munabih and others state, After the demise of prophet Moses, peace be upon him, the Israelites abided by his teachings for a period of time. Allah occasionally raised from amongst them a prophet to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong. Then they indulged into vice and corruption, deserted the worship of Allah and some of them even worshipped idols. As a result Allah caused their enemies to defeat them. The enemies killed many of them, captivated many others and seized many of their towns.

At the beginning, the Israelites were never defeated since they had had the Torah and the Ark of the Covenant, which was passed on from one generation to the next. But when they lapsed into falsehood, they were defeated in battle by their enemy whose king captured the Ark of the Covenant and took the Torah from them. There remained only a few among them who had memorized Torah. Allah ceased to raise prophets from among their tribes to the extent that the whole tribe of Lawi from which Allah raised prophets perished except a pregnant woman whose husband was also killed. Therefore, they confined her so that Allah may bestow upon her a boy who would be their prophet. The woman supplicated to Allah so that He may bestow upon her a boy. Then Allah accepted her supplication and bestowed upon her a boy whom she named Samuel (Shamwil or Shamun) meaning Allah accepted my supplication. Allah had this boy grew up among them in parity and beauty.

Ibn Katheer states: When he (Samuel) reached the age of prophethood, Allah sent him to call on the Israelites to worship Allah alone and so he did. Then they asked him to appoint for

them a king to lead them in fighting their enemies since they were without a king. Prophet Samuel said to them, Is it not possible, if Allah appoints for you a king, that you will not fight and will break your promise to fight with him? Allah, Exalted be He, says ***"Hast thou not turned thy vision to the Chiefs of the Children of Israel after (the time of) Moses. They said to a Prophet (that was) among them: 'Appoint for us a king, that we may fight in the cause of Allah.' He said, 'Is it not possible, if ye were commanded to fight, that ye will not fight?' They said: ' How could we refuse to fight in the cause of Allah, seeing that we were turned out of our homes and our families?'*** (Al Baqarah: 246) This means their land was seized and their families were captivated. But when they were commanded to fight, they refused except a small group among them. But Allah has full knowledge of those who do wrong. This verse indicates that most of them broke their promise of fighting and turned back. Allah states at the end of the story that only a few of them crossed the river with the king, however, the majority turned back and refused to fight.

Allah the Almighty then says: ***"Their Prophet said to them; 'Allah hath appointed Talut as king over you.' "*** Talut or Saul was one of their soldiers who did not belong to the household of kingship which was confined to the tribe of Judas. That is why their response was: ***"They said, 'How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance?"*** (Al Baqarah: 247) They argued that he was a poor man whose worldly belongings were slender. It is reported that he was a water carrier. It is also mentioned that he was a tanner. Their response indicates that they protested against the decision of their prophet though Allah states, ***"He said, 'Allah hath chosen him above you.' "*** Thus it seems as if he said, it is not me who appointed him on my own but it is Allah Who has

chosen him above you since He knows him better than you. Then he states, *"...and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess."* It is said that *"Knowledge"* signified that he was knowledgeable about wars. However, it is also said that he was tall or handsome. According to the context, it appears that he was the most handsome and knowledgeable amongst them next to their prophet. Their Prophet's saying, ***"Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth: Allah is All-embracing, and he knows all things"*** implies that judgement and creation are confined to Allah alone since He has abundant grace and mercy for which He chooses whomever He wills and He is Well-Aquatinted with who deserves to be granted authority.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And (further) their Prophet said to them: 'A Sign of his authority is that shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant, with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron carried by angels. In this a symbol for you if ye indeed have faith."*** (Al Baqarah: 248) Interpreting this verse, Ibn Katheer states, Among the blessings of appointing this righteous man (Saul) as a king over them was that he returned to them the Ark of the Covenant. It was captured by their enemy and they considered it to be the cause of their victory over their enemies. As for the word '*sakinah*' ***"security"***, it means tranquility and mercy. As Suddyy reports that Ibn `Abbaas explains, '*Sakinah*' refers to a golden basin in which the breasts of Prophets are washed. Allah gave it to Moses, peace be upon him, to put the Tablets in. As for the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, it is proposed that it refers to the relics of the tablets and some of Manna sent down to them when they were wandering in the wilderness. As for Allah's saying, ***"carried by angels"***, Ibn Katheer maintains that Moses told them that the angels

would come carrying the Ark of the Covenant and they would see that with their own eyes. This might be a sign for them and an obvious evidence of the truthfulness of what he said and that the king was truly appointed by Allah. Ibn Jarih reports that Ibn `Abbaas say that the angels came carrying the Ark of the Covenant, while it hanged between the heaven and the earth until they put it before Saul while people were watching that with their naked eyes.

Allah the Almighty says: ***"When Talut set forth with the armies, he said: 'Allah will test you at the stream; if any drinks of its water, he goes not with my army, only those who taste not of it go with me: a mere sip out of the hand is excused.' But they drank of it, except a few."*** (Al Baqarah: 249) According to Ibn Katheer the armies in this verse refers to those that obeyed Saul and accepted to go with him to fight their enemies who defeated them previously. Ibn `Abbaas points that the stream here is the river of Jordan. He also explains that the thirst of those who took a mere sip out of the hand was quenched but the thirst of those who drank of its water was not quenched.

Al-Bukhari reports that Al Baraa' Ibn `Aazib said: We, the companions of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, used to say that the number of the warriors at Badr was the same as the number of Saul's companions who crossed the river (of Jordan) with him, and all who crossed the river with him were believers, and they were over three hundred and ten men. Allah says: ***"When they crossed the river - he and the faithful ones with him, they said: 'This day we cannot cope with Goliath and his forces.' But those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said: 'How oft, by Allah's will, hath a small force vanquished a big one? Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere.' When they advanced to meet***

Goliath and his forces, they prayed: 'Our Lord! Pour out constancy on us and make our steps firm: help us against those that reject faith." (Al Baqarah: 249-50)

Ibn Katheer states that when those who crossed the river with Saul realized they were small in number and too weak to confront their enemy, those who believed in the truth of Allah's Promise encouraged them to fight. Upon advancing to meet Goliath and his forces, they prayed Allah to pour constancy on them, to make their steps firm while facing their enemy, to keep them away from retreat and weakness and to help them overpower the disbelievers. Thereupon, Allah the Ever-Hearing and the Ever-Seeing answered their prayer and granted them victory over the enemy out of His Mighty and Power in spite of the size and number of the enemy. In another verse Allah says: ***"Allah had helped you at Badr, when ye were a contemptible little force: then fear Allah: thus may ye show your gratitude."*** (Ali Imraan: 123)

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"By Allah's Will, they routed them; and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed."*** (Al Baqarah: 251) This indicates the courage of David, peace be upon him, for he killed Goliath in a manner that humiliated his forces and brought about their defeat. As Suddyy points that David, peace be upon him, was the youngest among his thirteen brothers. In order to rouse the Israelites to fight, Saul said, I will give my daughter in marriage to the one who kills Goliath and give him a half of his kingdom. David was used to using the sling skillfully. While he was with the Israelites, a pebble called him, take me for it is by me that you will kill Goliath; then a second and a third pebble did the same. He took the three pebbles and put them into his bag. When the two armies engaged in warfare, Goliath advanced and called for a

challenger. Then David advanced to fight him. Goliath said to him: I hate to kill you. David replied, But I love to kill you. He took the pebbles, put them in the sling and threw them at him that split his head and David killed him. The forces of Goliath were defeated and fled thereupon. Then, Saul gave David what he had promised him. Ibn Katheer proceeds, Then David, peace be upon him, succeeded Saul in ruling as a king, and also Allah granted him prophethood after Samuel and bestowed on him some of His special knowledge. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed. And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds."*** (Al Baqarah: 251) The last sentence of the verse means: did not Allah check one set of people by means of another as He defended the Israelites by means of Saul's fighting and David's courage. They would have perished, but Allah defended them owing to His mercy, and because He has wisdom, judgement and argument over them in all his actions and sayings.

THE STORY OF DAVID (DAWOOD), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Katheer states: David, peace be upon him, belongs to Judas, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, peace be upon them all. He is Allah's servant, messenger and vicegerent in Jerusalem. As previously mentioned, when David killed Goliath, Saul gave him half the kingdom of Goliath and shared with him his task. The Israelites loved David and were attached to him. He succeeded Saul as a king and Allah granted him prophethood as well. Thus, he became both a king and a prophet, while before him, the king belonged to one tribe of the Israelites and the prophet to another.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed. And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds."*** (Al Baqarah: 251) This means were Allah not to appoint kings to rule people, the strong amongst them would humiliate the weak. Thus it is reported, The king resembles Allah's shade on earth. The Caliph `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan, may Allah be pleased with him, said, Allah establishes by means of the king (ruler) what He may not establish by means of the Qur'an.

According to Ibn Katheer: Prophet David, peace be upon him, used to eat from the earnings of his manual work. He used to make defensive armors as a device to protect people while fighting the enemies. Qatadah maintains that Allah made the iron soft for him to the extent that he used to formulate it without using fire or a hammer. He was the first to make chain armors. Armors had been made in the shape of metal sheet. Then Allah taught him how to make chain armors. Allah,

Exalted be He, says: ***"We bestowed Grace aforetime on David from Ourselves: 'O ye Mountains! sing ye the Praises of Allah with him, and ye birds (also)!' And we made the iron soft for him - (commanding), 'Make thou coasts of mail, balancing well the rings of chain armor, and work ye righteousness; for be sure I see (clearly) all that ye do."*** (Saba': 10-11) Allah further says: ***"It was Our Power that made the hills and birds celebrate our praises, with David: it was We who did (all these things). It was We who taught him the making of coasts of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence: will ye then be grateful?"*** (Al Anbiyaa': 79-80) Allah also says: ***"And remember Our servant David, the man of strength: for he ever turned (to Allah). It was We that made the hills declare in unison with him, Our praises, at eventide and at break of day, and the birds gathered (in assemblies): all with him did turn (to Allah). We strengthened his kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgement in speech and decision."*** (Saad: 17-20)

According to Ibn `Abbaas and Mujahid, Allah's saying ***"The man of strength"*** denotes strength and steadfastness in worship and good deeds. Ibn Katheer states that it is reported in the two authentic books of *Hadith* that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The most beloved prayer to Allah was the prayer of (Prophet) David, and the most beloved fasting to Allah was the fasting of (Prophet) David. He used to sleep the (first half) of the night and pray for one third of it and then sleep one-sixth of it, and he used to fast on alternate days and would not flee on facing the enemy."*

Allah has granted David a very pleasant voice. When he recited his Book, the Psalms, in a pleasant voice, the birds gathered in assemblies to recite with him and the hills declared in unison with him Allah's praises in the evening and at dawn.

Once Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari at night while he was reciting the Qur'an. He (Abu Musa) had a very pleasant voice so the Prophet stopped to listen to his recitation and said, *"He has been gifted with one of (Prophet) David's psalms."* Abu `Uthmaan An-Nahdi said: I have heard the lute and wood-wind instrument, but I have never heard a more pleasant voice than that of Abu Musa Al-Ahs`aryy.

In addition to his melodious voice, David, peace be upon him, was fast in reciting his Book, the Psalms. Imam Ahmad reports on the authority of Abu Hurairah that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The reciting (of the Psalms) was made easy for David. He used to order that his riding animal be saddled, and would finish reciting the Qur'an before it was saddled. And he would never eat except from the earnings of his manual work."* The word 'Qur'an' in this *Hadith* refers to the Psalms which Allah revealed to him. Allah the Almighty says: ***"And We gave to David (the gift of) the Psalms."*** (Al Israa': 55)

As for Allah's saying, ***"We strengthened his kingdom"***, it means that Allah granted him great power and authority and respected, sound judgement. Ibn Jareer reports on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that two men came to David, peace be upon him, to judge between them concerning some cows which one of them claimed that the other seized unlawfully. The defendant denied it and the claimant had no evidence. David postponed the judgement in their case. At night Allah revealed to David that he should kill the claimant. In the morning David said to him, Allah revealed to me that I should kill you so I will inevitably kill you. But tell me, what about your accusation against this man? He said, Messenger of Allah, my accusation against him is true but I have previously killed his father and

none knew that. Thereupon David commanded that he was to be killed and he was. Then the Israelites paid him great respect.

Allah, Exalted be He says: *"...and gave him wisdom and sound judgement in speech and decision."* According to As Suddyy, *'wisdom'* here means prophethood while Mujahid claims that it refers to reason, understanding and intelligence. As for *'sound judgement in speech and decision'*, As Suddyy points that it means the understanding of cases and giving sound and true judgement.

Once David, peace be upon him was in his private chamber which was the best and holiest place in his house. He had ordered that none was to invade his privacy that day. He suddenly found two persons who had climbed over the wall of the private chamber asking him to judge between them. Allah relates this story saying, *"Has the Story of the Disputants reached thee? Behold, they climbed over the wall of the private chamber; when they entered to David and he was terrified of them, they said: 'Fear not: we are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other: decide now between us with truth, and treat us not with injustice, but guide us to the even Path. This man is my brother: he has nine and ninety ewes, and I have (but) one: yet he says: 'Commit her to my care', and he is moreover harsh to me in speech.' (David) said: 'He has undoubtedly wronged thee in demanding thy (single) ewe to be added to his flock of) ewes: truly many are the Partners (in business) who wrong each other: not so do those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and how few are they?' And David gathered that We had tried him: he asked forgiveness of his Lord, fell down, bowing (in prostration) and turned (to Allah in repentance). So We forgave him this (lapse): he enjoyed, indeed, a Near Approach*

to Us, and a beautiful Place of (final) return." (Saad: 21-25)

Here ***'a Near Approach'***, and ***'a beautiful Place of (final) return'*** refer to what Allah prepared for him on the Day of Judgement. Imam Moslem reports in his *Sahih* that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Behold! The dispensers of justice will be seated on the pulpits of light on the right side of (Allah) the Merciful. Either side of the Being is the right side both being equally meritorious. (The dispensers of justice are) those who do justice in their rules, in matters relating to their families and in all that they undertake to do."*

Exegetes of the Qur'an have mentioned many reports regarding this story but most of them are Judaic traditions (Israa'iliyaat). There is no authentic *Hadith* concerning it, which should be followed. It is more fitting to just recite these verses and confine its interpretation to Allah since the Qur'an is Truth and so is what it includes. Scholars differed though whether the prostration in *Surah*, "Saad" is obligatory or an expression of gratitude. Abu Dawud reports on the authority of Abu Sa`eed Al-Khudri who said, Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, recited *Surah*, "Saad" while he was on the pulpit and when he reached the verse of prostration, he came down and performed a prostration along with the people. On another day, he recited this *Surah* and when he reached the verse of prostration, people prepared themselves for prostration. Then he said, it was (performed as) an act of repentance of a Prophet, but I saw you prepared yourselves for prostration therefore, he came down and performed a prostration. Then Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth: so judge thou between men in truth (and justice): nor follow thou the lust (of thy heart), for it will mislead thee from the Path of Allah: for those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty***

Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account." (Saad: 26)

Ibn Katheer maintains: This speech of Allah has been directed to David, yet it is also directed to all rulers and commanders. They are all commanded to abide by justice and follow the truth revealed by Allah, not their whims and desires. Then Allah warns them that if they deviated form Allah's path, they would suffer a grievous chastisement on the Day of Judgement.

David, peace be upon him, set the best example of justice and sincere and intense worship to Allah. He offered several supererogatory devotional acts and made his family follow his example to the extent that they spent no hour, be it at day or at night, without offering a form of devotional act to Allah. Thus Allah praises them saying, ***"Work ye, Sons of David, in thanks! But few of My servants are grateful."*** (Saba': 13)

The Age of David, Peace Be Upon Him:

Ibn Katheer states: The *Hadiths* reported about the creation of Adam mentions that when Allah drew from Adam's back his descendants and showed him the Prophets among them, Adam saw amongst them a man with a shining face, so he asked, 'O my Lord! Who is this man?' Allah said, 'This is your son, David.' He asked, 'O my Lord! How old will be he?' Allah said, '60 years.' He said, 'O my Lord! Increase his age.' Allah said, 'I will not increase it except out of your own age.' (Adam had known from Allah that his own age would be one thousand years) so he granted David 40 years of his age. When Adam's life came to an end, the angel of death came to take his soul. Then (Adam) said, 'There still remain 40 years of my age.' He forgot that he had gifted David with them. Then Allah completed Adam's age to be one thousand years and

the age of David to be one hundred years.

The People of the Book state that the period of David's kingship was 40 years. Ibn Katheer points that this view may be accepted for we have nothing to prove or contradict it.

The Death of Prophet David, Peace Be Upon Him:

Abu Hurairah reports that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"(Prophet) David, peace be upon him, was a very jealous man. When he left his house, he used to lock it up so that none may enter it until he returned. One day he went out and locked up the house. Then while his wife was walking in the house, she found a man standing in the middle of the house. She asked those who were in the house (i.e. its inhabitants), 'How did this man enter the house though it is locked up? By Allah, David will reproach us today.' When David came back, he found the man standing in the middle of the house. He asked him, 'Who are you?' He (the man) replied, 'I am the one who does not fear nor be prevented by gatekeepers (chamberlains).' David said, 'By Allah, you are the angel of death. Welcome to Allah's command.' David remained until the angel took his soul. After he was washed and wrapped in the shroud, the sun rose over him. Solomon said to the birds, 'Give David shade.' They did so till it became dark. Then Solomon said to the birds, 'Hold one wing in.' Abu Hurairah said that Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, began to show us how the birds held a wing in and held his arm in and the falcons gave him more shade than other birds that day."*

Is-haaq Ibn Bishr reports that Wahb Ibn Munabbih said: People attended the funeral of David, peace be upon him. They sat in the heat of the sun on a summery day. Among the people

who attended his funeral that day were forty hundred anchorites. After Moses and Aaron, David was the one over whom the Israelites grieved most. The people suffered from the heat of the sun and so they asked Solomon to protect them against it. Solomon went out and called the birds so they answered him. He ordered them to give people shade. They gathered in rows on all sides until they prevented the wind so people were about to die as a result. People complained to Solomon, peace be upon him, again. So he went out and ordered the birds to give them shade from the side of the sun and to leave the side from which the wind blew. So they did. Thus people enjoyed the shade while the wind was blowing towards them. This was the first indication of Solomon's kingly power they witnessed.

THE STORY OF SOLOMON (SULAIMAAN), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Solomon is, as Ibn Katheer states, the son of Prophet Dawood (David), peace be upon both of them. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"And Solomon was David's heir."***(Al Naml: 16) This verse means that Solomon inherited his father's kingdom and Prophetic office. It does not imply that he inherited his property and riches as David, peace be upon him, had many issues other than Solomon, and, as such, it would not be reasonable for him to bequeath him solely his property. Moreover, it was reported by authentic transmission that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Our property, we the chain of Prophets, is not to be inherited, and whatever we leave is to be given to charity."*

Solomon's Understanding of the Speech of Birds:

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"O ye people! We have been taught the speech of birds."*** (Al Naml: 16) That is to say Solomon managed to understand the language of birds and used to express to people whatever they wished to convey.

It was reported by Al-Baihaqi that Solomon once passed by a sparrow which was dallying around a female sparrow. Upon seeing it, Solomon said to his companions, "Do you know what he says?" Thereupon they answered, "What does he say, Prophet of Allah?" He replied, "He proposes to her saying: marry me and you can dwell in any of Damascus dwellings you wish. Solomon then commented, "Damascus dwellings are carved out in the rocks, and are uninhabitable, but every suitor is a liar!"

Ibn Katheer states: Solomon was able to comprehend not

just the language of birds, he could also understand the language of other animals as well as different kinds of creatures. To prove this, he next says, *" 'And on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things' "* i.e. he was granted everything that a king would need namely, soldiers, equipment, Jinns, people, birds, beasts, science, and expression *"And this is indeed Grace manifest (from Allah)"* which means Allah's Grace on us is evident and obvious.

The Story of Solomon, Peace Be upon Him, with the Ant:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"And before Solomon were marshaled with his hosts - of Jinns and men and birds, and they were all kept in order and ranks. At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said, 'O ye ants, get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it.' So he smiled, amused at its speech; and said, "O my lord! so order me that I may be grateful for Thy favors, which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee: and admit me, by Thy Grace to the ranks of Thy Righteous Servants."*(Al Naml: 17-9)

Ibn Katheer states: Allah, Exalted be He, tells the story of Solomon, peace be upon him, when he once rode out with his army of people and with Jinns escorting him, and the birds casting a shadow on him to shield him from the heat, " and they were all kept in order and ranks", which means the front lines were halted until the back lines would catch up with them so that no creature would overstep its limits.

Allah says: *"At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said, 'O ye ants, get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot)*

without knowing it." (Al Naml: 18) The ant voiced an order, issued a warning, and saw the excuse of Solomon and his soldiers namely, that they did not know or did not do it deliberately.

Solomon, peace be upon him, understood its speech, and smiled out of joy and happiness for being solely chosen by Allah to be let in on this. Some people who are in the dark wrongly claim that the beasts used to address people till Solomon, son of David, made them vow to hold their peace and never talk to people again.

Had this been the case, Solomon's ability to comprehend their speech would not have been a privilege that he solely enjoyed, as all people would have been able to understand their speech, too, supposing that this is true. Had he made them vow not to talk to anyone else but him, and he was thus able to understand them, that would not have been an advantage either. Therefore, he said, ***"O my lord! So order me"***, meaning inspire and enable me, ***" that I may be grateful for Thy favors, which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee: and admit me, by Thy Grace to the ranks of Thy Righteous Servants."*** Solomon invokes Allah to enable him to thank Him for the Grace Allah has bestowed on him and the privilege that only he was granted. He also supplicates Him to enable him to do good deeds, and, should he die, to be resurrected together with the pious and the righteous of the servants of Allah.

Az-Zuhri states that Solomon, son of David, peace be upon him, went out along with some companions to pray for rain. He saw an ant raising one of its legs to the sky and praying for rain, so he told his companions: ***"Go back for rain is going to fall. This ant has prayed for rain and her prayers***

were answered!"

Solomon's Story with the Hoopoe:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"And he took a muster of the birds; and he said, 'Why is it I see not the Hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees? I will certainly punish him with a severe penalty, or execute him, unless he brings me a clear reason (for absence)." But the Hoopoe tarried not far: he (came up and) said, "I have compassed (territory) which thou hast not compassed, and I have come to thee from Saba with tidings true. I found (there) a woman ruling over them and provided with every requisite; and she has as a magnificent throne. I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah: Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing to their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path - so they receive no guidance - (kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah, Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what ye hide and what ye reveal. Allah! - There is no god but He! -Lord of the Throne Supreme! (Solomon) said: "Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth or lied! Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them: then draw back from them, and (wait to) see what answer they return."*(Al Naml: 20-8)

Ibn `Abbaas states that the Hoopoe used to guide Solomon, peace be upon him, to places of water. Whenever he was in the desert, he would ask for him to be brought so as to locate water at great depths. The Hoopoe was able to see it just as a man is able to see the apparent objects above the surface of the earth, and it was capable of determining its depth, too. Once it specified the exact spot, Solomon would order the Jinns to dig up this place so that water would come gushing out.

Ibn Katheer writes: Ibn `Abbaas once narrated this story to a crowd of people among whom was a man from the Kharijites called Nafie' Ibn Al-Azraq who was constantly in the habit of objecting to everything Ibn `Abbaas said. He said, "Stop, Ibn `Abbaas, you are outdone today.' Ibn `Abbaas asked, 'Why?' The man answered, "You said, that the Hoopoe could see water at depths below the surface of the earth, yet a boy could set a trap for it with a seed and cover the trap with sand, then the Hoopoe would come to pick the seed only to be ensnared and caught by the boy.' Ibn `Abbaas then said, 'Had it not been for the fact that he would go round claiming that he had outdone Ibn `Abbaas, I would not have answered him.' Then he told him, 'Woe unto you! When it comes to fate, man's perception is blinded and his guard is let down.' Nafie' thus said, 'I swear I would never argue with you about matters in the Qur'an.'

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"And he took a muster of the birds."*** Ibn Is-haaq explains: Solomon, peace be upon him, was in the habit of mustering the birds, and each day every species would delegate one of them to meet him. When one day he beheld all species of birds with the exception of the Hoopoe, ***"and he said, 'Why is it I see not the Hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees?"*** Ibn Katheer explains, is he out of my sight or is he absent and has not showed up? ***"I will certainly punish him with a severe penalty"*** Ibn `Abbaas and others interpret those words as meaning: I will pluck out its plumage, ***"or execute him," i.e.*** I will kill him ***"unless he brings me a clear reason (for absence)."*** that is to say, with some good acceptable excuse.

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"But the Hoopoe tarried not far".*** Ibn Katheer expounds on this saying: The Hoopoe was absent for a short period of time after which he came back ***"he***

(came up and) said," to Solomon " ' ***I have compassed (territory) which thou hast not compassed*** " i.e. I have news of things you know nothing about. ***"I have come to thee from Saba with tidings true."*** meaning with a true piece of news, " ***I found (there) a woman ruling over them".*** Al-Hasan Al-Basri states: She is Bilqis, in Arabian tradition, daughter of Sharaheil, Queen of Saba or Sheba, a city in Yemen. Qatadah adds that her mother was a genie. Ath-Tha'labi and others maintain that after the decease of her father, her people enthroned a man who soon grew depraved. She then asked for his hand in marriage so he married her. Upon their marriage, she offered him wine and got him drunk, then cut off his head and hung it on her door. People thereupon flocked to her to enthrone her.

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"Provided with every requisite",*** Ibn Katheer explains this as all worldly possessions that a powerful king would need. ***"And she has as a magnificent throne"*** meaning the throne she used to sit on was grand, splendid and decorated with all types of gems, pearls and gold.

The Hoopoe next mentions that she and her people were atheists who worshipped the sun besides Allah as they were led astray by Satan. He says: " ***I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah: Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing to their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path - so they receive no guidance - (kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah."*** This verse means that they did not know that prostrating oneself should solely be to Allah and not to any of the planets that He had created. Allah, Exalted be He, similarly, states in another verse: " ***Among His Signs are the Night and the day, and the Sun and the moon. Adore not the sun and the moon, but adore Allah who created them, if it is him ye wish to serve."***

Allah, Exalted be He, says: " ***Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth".*** Ibn `Abbaas and others explain: He knows all that is hidden in the Heavens and on the earth. ***"And knows what ye hide and what ye reveal."*** Ibn Katheer explicates on this saying: He knows all that is said, or done, be it known or secret. ***"Allah! - There is no god but He! -Lord of the Throne Supreme!"*** meaning Allah's magnificent Throne is the Greatest ever as it surpasses any other throne possessed by any creature.

When the Hoopoe told Solomon, peace be upon him, about the people of Sheba and their Queen, ***"said,"*** i.e. Solomon " ***Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth as to the news you broke to us, or lied!*** " meaning you told a lie to evade the punishment that I have set for you. He then wrote a message to the people of Sheba wherein he called on them to obey Allah and his Prophet, to give in to him and his kingdom. He then handed it to the Hoopoe saying: ***"Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them: then draw back from them, and (wait to) see what answer they return."***

The Story of Solomon, Peace Be upon Him, with Bilqis:

Allah, Exalted be He, says: " ***(The Queen) said, ' Ye chiefs! Here is-delivered to me - a letter worthy of respect. It is from Solomon, and is (as follows): ' In the name of Allah, Most Gracious Most Merciful: be ye not arrogant against me, but come to me in submission (to the true Religion).' " She said, 'Ye Chiefs! Advise me in (this) my affair: no affair have I decided except in your presence.' " They said, 'We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war: but the command is with thee; so consider what thou wilt command.'" She said, "Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave.***

But I am going to send Him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors. Now when (the embassy) came to Solomon, he said," Will ye give me abundance in wealth? But that which Allah has given me is better than that which He has given you! Nay it is ye who rejoice in your gift! Go back to them, and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet: we shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed). " (Al Naml: 29-37)

Ibn Katheer states that the Hoopoe flew with the message of Solomon, peace be upon him, until it reached the palace of Bilqis. It delivered the message to her while she was alone, and then stepped aside waiting for her answer. Bilqis next gathered all her princes, ministers, and key figures of her kingdom, *" (The Queen) said, ' Ye chiefs! Here is - delivered to me - a letter worthy of respect.'"* She then read it, *"In the name of Allah, Most Gracious Most Merciful: be ye not arrogant against me, but come to me in submission (to the true Religion). "* The message was an example of admirable eloquence and brevity. She next sought their counsel on this affair, *"She said, 'Ye Chiefs! Advise me in (this) my affair: no affair have I decided except in your presence.' "* She meant she never resolved any issue except in their presence. *"They said, 'We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war' "* meaning they were powerful and were endowed with an enormous ability to fight and resist and were thus ready to fight Solomon if she so willed it. *" 'But the command is with thee; so consider what thou wilt command.'"* However, they still gave her full reign to take whatever action she saw was in her and their best interest.

She was wiser and more decisive than they were. She realized that the sender of this message could not be conquered

or subdued. *"She said, Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest"* Allah, Exalted be He says, *"thus do they behave."* She then reverted to reconciliation and truth saying, *" But I am going to send Him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors. "* Qatadah comments: How wise she was before and after embracing Islam. She perceived that a gift always had an impact on people.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: *"Now when (the embassy) came to Solomon, he said, 'Will ye give me abundance in wealth?' "* He meant are you tempting me with money to let you persist in your atheism? *" 'But that which Allah has given me is better than that which He has given you!' "* meaning the riches, kingship and armies that Allah had granted me are better than what you have. *"Nay it is ye who rejoice in your gift!"* He meant that it is you who can be captivated by presents. As for me, I would only accept one of two things: either that you embrace Islam or engage in war. He then addressed her messenger in the presence of all people saying: *" 'Go back to them,' "* i.e. taking the present back with you *" and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet: we shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed). "* meaning subdued and humiliated.

Therefore, when they learnt this about the Prophet of Allah, they found that they had no choice but to listen and obey. So they immediately answered his call, and went to him, together with their Queen, Bilqis, showing humble obedience. When Solomon, peace be upon him, learned of their arrival, he gathered those of the people and the Jinns that were subject to his service, "He said, (to his own men), ' Ye Chiefs! Which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission? ' " Solomon, peace be upon him, intended this to

be a display of the grandeur of the kingship Allah has granted him and the bondsmen that He subjected to him. He also intended this to be an evidence of his kingship before Bilqis and her people, as it would be an enormous miracle for him to bring her throne just as it was from her homeland, before they arrived, though she had it chained down to the ground and put under heavy guard.

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Said, an `Ifrit, of the Jinns, 'I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy council:"*** i.e. your assembly. ***" 'Indeed I have full strength for the purpose and may be trusted.' "*** meaning I am strong enough to carry it, and can be entrusted with the gems with which it is studded. Solomon, peace be upon him, then said, I need the job to be done faster. At this point, ***"Said, one who had knowledge of the Book:"*** Ibn `Abbaas elucidates saying: He was Aasef, Solomon's writer. Qatadah states: He was one of Solomon's human servants who was a believer, ***" 'I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!' "*** Wahb Ibn Munabih explains, this means before you look straight ahead of you, and I will have brought it to you before you have made out the horizon. Solomon then got up, performed ablution and prayed to Allah, Exalted be He, only to find the throne right before his eyes.

Allah, Exalted be He, says" ***"Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him"*** meaning when Solomon saw the throne of Bilqis placed right before him after it was transferred from Yemen to Jerusalem in a blink of an eye, ***"he said, 'This is by the grace of my Lord! - to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful"*** i.e. Allah has generously granted this to me and to his bondmen to test us and see whether we will show gratitude or not, ***"And if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul;"*** that is to say, he is doing himself

good, ***"but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of All Needs, Supreme in Honor!' "*** meaning Allah does not need the gratitude of those who show it, nor does the ingratitude of the unbelievers do Him harm.

Similarly, Allah, Exalted be He, says in another verse: ***"And Moses said, ' If ye show ingratitude, ye and all on earth together - yet is Allah Free of all wants, worthy of all praise.' "*** In Saheeh Moslem: *" O My bondmen, even if the first of you or the last of you, the whole human race, and that of the Jinns, become (equally) as pious as the heart of the single most righteous person amongst you, it will add nothing to My Power. O My bondmen, even if the first amongst you, the last amongst you, the whole human race, and that of the Jinns too become in unison as wicked as the heart of the single most evil person amongst you, it will cause no loss of My Power. O My bondmen, these deeds of yours, which I am recording for you, I shall reward you for them. So he who finds them good should praise Allah, and he who finds them otherwise should not blame anyone but himself."*

Then, Solomon, peace be upon him, ordered Bilqis's throne to be transformed and changed in order to test her ability of perception and recognition, ***"He said, ' Transform her throne out of all recognition by her: Let us see whether she is guided (to the truth) or is one of those who receive no guidance.' So when she arrived, she was asked, ' Is this thy throne?' she said, ' It was just like this"*** 'This proves her subtlety and depth of understanding, as she ruled out the possibility that this could be her throne which she left behind in Yemen. She thus did not state with any certainty whether it was or was not her throne when she saw the way the throne looked, despite the fact that it had been changed and transformed, ***"And knowledge was bestowed on us in advance***

of this, and we have submitted to Allah (in Islam). " Mujahid states: This was said by Solomon. ***"And he diverted her from the worship of others besides Allah: for she was (sprung) of a people that had no faith."*** She and her people worshipped and knelt down in prostration to the sun simply because they followed the cult of their parents and ancestors, and not because they had evidence that led them to such worship.

Solomon had ordered the Jinns to build Bilqis a great palace from glass and to have rivers run below it, ***"She was asked to enter the Lofty Palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs."*** She suspected it was water through which she had to wade. ***"He said, ' This is but a palace paved smooth'"*** meaning it was a well-established, smooth-looking building ***"with slabs of glass."*** The whole palace was made out of glass. Queen Bilqis was stunned by all that Allah had granted Solomon. She contemplated his status and realized he was a revered Prophet. She, therefore, showed full submission to Allah, Exalted be He. ***"She said, 'O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul "*** that is to say, by being an atheist and by worshipping the sun instead of Allah. ***"I do (now) submit (in Islam), with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds."*** meaning she would embrace the religion of Solomon and worship only Allah.

The Story of Solomon, Peace Be upon Him, with the Horses:

Allah, Exalted be He, says in *Surah*, "Saad", ***" To David we gave Solomon (for a son)"*** and he was a Prophet ***" - how excellent in Our service! Ever did he turn when (to Us)!"*** i.e. he was an example of obedience, piousness and constant resorting to Allah. ***"Behold, there were brought before him, at eventide, coursers of the highest breeding, and swift of foot;"***

meaning he was shown, while in his kingdom, coursers of the highest breeding. Mujahid explains: They are the horses stand on three legs, firmly planted, with the hoof of the fourth leg lightly resting on the ground. These are swift horses. ***"And he said, 'Truly do I love the love of Good, with a view to the glory of my Lord '-until (the sun) was hidden in the veil (of Night):"*** (Saad: 32)

A number of exegetes mention that Solomon, peace be upon him, was so engrossed in the inspection of his fine horses that he completely forgot to perform his 'Asr prayer before the sunset. Ibn Katheer adds that, there is no doubt that he did not, deliberately and for no excuse, choose not to perform the prayer, but it simply slipped out of his mind, just as Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, forgot to perform the 'Asr prayer during the Battle of Trench, and performed it after sunset, an event which was confirmed in the two *Saheehs*. It is also possible that it was acceptable then to delay performing the prayer on account of the battle and the war, and inspecting the horses can be seen as a similar excuse.

Upon missing the 'Asr prayer, he said, ***" 'Bring them back to me.' "*** Then he fell to slashing (their) legs and their necks with his sword. As-Suddyy says, He cut off their necks and hamstrings using a sword. Ibn Katheer states that this may have been acceptable in their religion, especially if he was seeking the forgiveness and satisfaction of Allah. That is why Allah compensated him with something that was far better; the wind that blew gently to his order, as he willed, its early morning (stride) was a month's (journey), and its evening (stride) was a month's (journey), which is far better and swifter than the horses.

Imam Ahmad mentions that Abu-Qatadah and Abu Ad-Dahmaa', who frequently set out on trips to the Haram, said,

We encountered a nomad who told us: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, taught me some of what Allah, Exalted be He, had taught him saying: ***"Whenever you relinquish something out of fear of Allah, Exalted be He, Allah grants you something that is far better."***

His Power and Kingdom, Peace Be upon Him:

Allah, Exalted be He, says, ***"And we did try Solomon:"*** that is to say, we tested him by taking his power away from him. ***"We placed on his throne a body (without life):"*** Ibn `Abbaas and others explain: i.e. a demon. ***"But he did turn (to Us in true devotion):"*** Ibn Katheer states: He went back to his kingdom, power and grandeur. In this regard, exegetes have mentioned a number of stories, which we are not going to go through, as they are all Jewish stories from the Old Testament. ***"He said, ' O my Lord! Forgive me, and grant me a kingdom which (it may be), suits not another after me:"*** meaning no one else from the people, ***"For Thou art the Grantor of Bounties (without measure)."*** (Saad: 32)

It was reported by Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"A strong demon from the Jinns came to me yesterday suddenly, so as to spoil my prayer, but Allah enabled me to overpower him, and so I caught him and intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the mosque so that all of you might see him, but I remembered the invocation of my brother Solomon:' O my Lord! Forgive me, and grant me a kingdom which (it may be), suits not another after me: ' so I let him go humiliated."*

Moslem also reports that Abu Ad-Dardaa', may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, stood up to pray and we heard him say: " *I seek*

refuge in Allah." Then he said, "I cursed thee with Allah's curse" three times, then he stretched out his hand as though he were taking hold of something. When he finished the prayer, we said, Messenger of Allah, we heard you say something during the prayer, which we had not heard you say before, and we saw you stretch out your hand. He replied: "Allah's enemy, Iblis, came with a flame of fire to put in my face, so I said, three times: ' I seek refuge in Allah from thee. ' Then I said three times, ' I curse thee with Allah's full curse.' But he did not retreat on (any one of these) three occasions. Thereafter I meant to seize him. I swear by Allah that had it not been for the supplication of my brother, Solomon, he would have been bound and made an object of sport for the children of Medina (Madinah)."

It was stated by `Amr Ibn Al-`Aas that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"When Solomon built Jerusalem, he asked Allah, Exalted be He, three things, two of which he was granted and we hope to have been granted the third: he asked Him judgment that was comparable to Allah's, and this he was granted, he asked him a kingdom that suits not another after him, and this he was granted, and he asked him that whenever a man left his house with the sole intention of praying in this mosque (Al Aqsa Mosque), he would be absolved of all his sins and would become sinless as he was the day he was born. We therefore hope that Allah has granted us this."*

Ibn Katheer states: As for the judgment that was comparable to that of Allah's, Exalted be He, Allah praised him and his father in the verse: ***" And remember David and Solomon, when they give judgment in the matter of the field into which the sheep of certain people had strayed by night: We did witness their judgment. To Solomon We inspired the***

(right) understanding of the matter: to each (of them) we gave Judgment and Knowledge." It was recounted by many narrators that those people had a vineyard, wherein the sheep of the other people had spread, i.e. trespassed on by night and ate up all its plants. They raised their case to David, peace be upon him, and he awarded the owner of the field the sheep themselves in compensation for his damage. When they went out and met Solomon, he asked them, "what did the Prophet of Allah rule?" They answered, "He ruled so and so." He said, "Had it been up to me, I would have ordered the sheep to be handed to the owners of the vineyard to benefit from its yield and profit until the owners of the sheep have restored the vineyard of the other people to its previous condition, and then they could have their sheep back." When David, peace be upon him, was informed of this, he approved it.

Similarly, it was confirmed in the two *Saheehs* that Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, said, that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, *"Two women had their sons with them, and suddenly a wolf passed by snatching one of the two boys. Thus they fought over the other. The elder said, 'The wolf took your son', and the younger said, 'No, it took yours.' They raised their case to David, who ruled that he was the elder's. They went out and met Solomon, who said, 'Bring me a knife and I will cut him into two, for each to take a half.' The younger thereupon said, 'Do not, may Allah have mercy on you, he is her son.' Thus, he ruled that the child was hers."*

Ibn Katheer states: Perhaps both rulings were acceptable according to their laws, but what Solomon said, was more judicious, that is why Allah praised him for what He inspired him with. He next praised his father, as Allah says: ***"To each (of them) We gave Judgments and Knowledge; it was our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises.***

With David: it was We Who did (all these things). It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence: will ye then be grateful?" (Al Anbiyaa': 79-80)

Then, Allah, Exalted be He says: ***"(It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon,"*** that is to say, Allah subjected the violent wind to the service of Solomon. ***"To his order, to the land which We had blessed: for We do know all things. And of the evil ones, were some who dived for him,"*** meaning they would dive to extract pearls and gems. ***"And did other work besides;"*** i.e. do other tasks. ***"And it was We Who guarded them."*** that is to say, Allah guarded him lest any of the demons should do him harm, everything was in the palm of his hand and under his control, and it was up to him to release it or to hold it back. In *Surah*, "S̲aad", Allah, Exalted be He says: ***"Then We subjected the Wind to his power, to flow gently to his order, whithersoever he willed"*** that is to say, to any country he wished ***"- as also the evil ones, (including) every kind of builder and diver"*** i.e. some of them engaged in erecting huge buildings and undertook strenuous tasks that human beings would fail to perform, while others dive deep into the seas to extract priceless gems ***"- as also others bound together in fetters."*** meaning bound with shackles namely those who were rebellious or disobedient or those who did wrong. ***"Such are Our Bounties: whether thou bestow them (on others) or withhold them, no account will be asked."*** meaning we have granted you absolute kingship and full power as you requested, so bestow whatever you want on whomever you wish and deprive whomever you want, as you shall not be held accountable. This was the case with the 'king Prophet', unlike the 'bondman messenger' who is not to grant anyone anything except with Allah's permission.

Our Prophet, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, had been given the choice between these two states, and he chose to be a bondman Messenger. It had been mentioned that he sought the counsel of Gabriel on this, and Gabriel advised him to be humble, thus he chose to be a bondman Messenger, peace be upon him. Allah has made Muhammad 's people His vicegerent and has endowed them with kingship to the Day of Judgment, and so a group of his people will continue to be successful till Doomsday, it is to Allah that we are grateful.

When Allah, Exalted be He, mentioned what he had granted to his Prophet Solomon, peace be upon him, in this world, he referred to the handsome reward He had set for him in the Hereafter, as He, Exalted be He says: ***"He enjoyed, indeed, a Near Approach to Us and a beautiful Place of (final) Return. "***

Allah, Exalted be He, says in *Surah*, "Saba'", ***"And to Solomon (We made) the Wind (obedient): its early morning (stride) was a month's (journey), and its evening (stride) was a month's (journey);"*** Al-Hasan Al-Basri states: He would set out from Damascus, reach Estakhar, where he would lunch then travel for a short distance to reach Kabel where he would spend the night. The distance between Damascus and Kabel would be covered in a whole month by a hasty traveler, and between Estakhar and Kabel was a month's journey, too. Ibn Katheer states: People who were well informed on cities and states mention that Estakhar was built by the Jinns to Solomon, and that it contained the remnants of the ancient Turk kingdom, like many other cities such as Tadmur and Jerusalem.

Allah, be He Exalted, says, ***"And We made a Font of molten brass to flow for him;"*** Ibn `Abbaas and others say, i.e. copper. Qatadah says, Allah caused it to gush out for him in Yemen. As-Suddyy said, Allah caused it to flow for him for

only three days. ***"And there were Jinns that worked in front of him, by the leave of his Lord, and if any of them turned aside from Our command, We made him taste of the Penalty of the Blazing Fire. "*** Ibn Katheer states: Allah subjected many Jinns to his service that would do exactly as he says, and would always obey his commands. Whoever dared to disobey him would be severely punished and tortured. They worked for him as he desired, (making) **"Arches"** meaning the well-established buildings, ***"Images"*** i.e. pictures on the walls, ***"Basins, as large as reservoirs"*** these are the basins wherein water used to be amassed, and ***"(cooking) cauldrons fixed (in their places):"*** i.e. stable where they are placed and never moving on account of their grandeur. These were for offering food and showing benevolence to men and animals, that is why Allah the Almighty says,***" 'Work ye, sons of David, with thanks! But few of My servants are grateful!' "*** meaning show in action your gratitude for what Allah has granted you, namely a sound religion and a good life, which proves that gratitude is shown in deeds as well as in words. (Saba': 13)

Many of the early Muslims mentioned that Solomon had a thousand women; seven hundred of whom were freeborn, while three hundred were slaves. It was also suggested that it was the opposite; he had three hundred freeborn women and seven hundred slaves. Solomon's potency was incredibly high. Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, stated that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Solomon, son of David said, I can stop by a hundred women tonight, causing each of whom to give birth to a baby who will fiercely fight for Allah's cause. However he did not say " if Allah wills it". That night he did stop by a hundred women and not one of them conceived, with the exception of one who gave birth to half a child. Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, had he said, 'If Allah wills it', each of the*

women would have given birth to a boy who would fiercely fight for Allah's cause."

The Death of Solomon, Peace Be upon Him:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Then, when We decreed (Solomon's) death, nothing showed them his death except a little worm of the earth, which kept (slowly) gnawing away at his staff: so when he fell down, the Jinns saw plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in the humiliating Penalty (of their Task)."*** (Saba': 14)

As-Suddyy quoted Ibn `Abbaas and other companions as saying: Solomon, peace be upon him, used to retreat to the mosque of Jerusalem for a year or two or a month or two, or even a longer or shorter period. He would go into retreat taking his food and water with him, and so he did the very last time before he died. Every time he woke up in the morning, a tree would grow in Jerusalem, and he would ask the tree what its name was. The tree would answer, my name is so and so. If it was for a good purpose that it grew, he would let it grow, and if it was a remedy, the tree would say, I grew to be a remedy for so and so, and he would let it grow, too. Until one day, a tree called Al-Kharouba grew. He asked it what its name was. She answered, 'I am Al-Kharouba.' He asked, for what purpose did you grow? The tree replied, I grew for the purpose of demolishing this mosque. Thus, Solomon said, Allah would never demolish it while I am alive. You mark my impending death and the demolition of the mosque of Jerusalem. Therefore, he uprooted it and planted it on a wall, then walked into his retreat. He got up to pray and leant on his cane. He died yet the Jinns never learnt of that and so they kept working for him, afraid that he might come out and punish them. The Jinns used to gather around his retreat. The place had two holes

in the wall, one at the front and the other at the back. A Jinn that was daring would say, would I not be courageous if I entered from one hole and got out from the other? And it would enter from one side and get out from the other. Once one of the Jinns went in and passed through. Whenever a Jinn looked at Solomon, peace be upon him, while he was in his retreat, it was sure to be burned. That Jinn never heard the voice of Solomon. It went back, but still could hear nothing. It was even trapped in the retreat but did not get burned. It saw Solomon, peace be upon him, dead on the ground. The Jinn went out and told all people that Solomon had died. They opened his retreat and took him out. They found his cane, eaten up by the woodworm, yet they could not tell when exactly he died. They set woodworms loose on the cane to eat away at it for a whole day, then worked out their calculations and found out he had died a year ago.

Ibn Mas`oud states: They kept toiling for a whole year after his death. People thereupon were certain that the Jinns lied, because had they really been able to see the future, they would have learnt of Solomon's death and would not have toiled and slaved around for a whole year. That is why Allah, Exalted be He, says: ***"Nothing showed them his death except a little worm of the earth, which kept (slowly) gnawing away at his staff: so when he fell down the Jinns saw plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in the humiliating Penalty (of their Task)."*** (Saba': 14)

Ibn Jareer mentions: Solomon, peace be upon him, died in his fifties. Four years after he ascended the throne, he ordered the mosque of Jerusalem to be built. Ibn `Abbaas states that he ruled for twenty years. Ibn Jareer adds: After his death, his son, Rehoboam (Rahba'am) ruled for seventeen years, after which the kingdom of Israel was divided.

THE STORY OF EZRA (`UZAIR), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Katheer states: It is famous that Ezra is an Israelite Prophet. He was sent in a period between David and his son, Solomon, and Zechariah and John. It was when no one among the children of Israel could memorize the Torah that Allah enabled Ezra to memorize and then convey it to them. Wahb Ibn Munabih reports that Allah ordered an angel to enlighten Ezra's heart. The angel inscribed the Torah in his heart until he kept it wholeheartedly.

The Destruction of Jerusalem:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"and We decreed for the children of Israel in the Scripture, that twice would they do mischief on the earth and be elated with mighty arrogance (and twice would they be punished)! When the first of the warnings came to pass, we sent against you our servants given to terrible warfare: they entered the very inmost parts of your homes; and it was a warning (completely) fulfilled."*** (Al Israa': 4-5)

Ibn Katheer states: Allah told the children of Israel in the Scripture revealed to them that they would spread corruption on the earth twice, oppress people and transgress bounds, and would become tyrants. When the first corruption was brought about, Allah would send against them a battalion of His bondmen endowed with great might and equipment. They would ravage their country and walk with extreme arrogance fearing none of the Israelites. This was a promise which was completely fulfilled.

There is a difference between the early and late Muslim scholars over people whom Allah sent forth against the

tyrannical Israelites. Ibn `Abbaas and Qatadah are of the opinion that they were the forces of Goliath. He held sway over them, and then they were granted victory over him when David killed Goliath. In this respect, Allah says: ***"Then did we grant you victory over them, we gave you increase in resources and sons, and made you the more numerous in man-power."*** (Al Israa': 6).

However, it was stated on the authority of Sa`eed Ibn Jubair that they were the forces of Sanjareeb, the king of Mosul. In another narration, he was quoted as saying that they were the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Ibn Katheer states: Many Judaic traditions (Israeliyyaat) have been narrated in this regard which I did not like to mention, for some of these traditions have been fabricated by the freethinkers among them; some are correct, but thanks for our Lord that we are in no need of these traditions.

As the children of Israel oppressed people and spread corruption on the earth, Allah raised against them their enemies who held sway over them. This was a fitting recompense for their transgression and killing of Prophets and scholars.

Sa'eed Ibn Al-Musayyib was quoted as saying, "Nebuchadnezzar marched out his troops to Syria. He destroyed Jerusalem and killed its people. Upon coming to Damascus, he saw a blood boiling over a heap of garbage. He said, "what is this blood?" People said," this is a blood that has been found since the time of our forefathers; as soon as garbage covers it, it boils over it again". Thereupon, Nebuchadnezzar killed about seventy thousand Muslims and others, and put them on that blood, and as a result, it ceased to boil.

Commenting on this incident, Ibn Katheer states: That

blood is supposed to be the blood of a previous Prophet or a righteous predecessor, or the blood of a man Allah is Best Knowledgeable about him. This narration is ascribed to Sa'eed Ibn Al-Musayyib and it is correct. Nebuchadnezzar terminated the lives of notables and scholars of the Israelites until no one of those who memorized the Torah survived. He, moreover, captivated a large number of the children of Israel."

Allah the Almighty next says: ***"If ye did well, ye did well for yourselves; if ye did evil,(ye did it) against yourselves. So when the second of the warnings came to pass, (we permitted your enemies) to disfigure your faces, and to enter your Temple as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction all that fell into power. It may be that your Lord may (yet) show mercy unto you; but if ye revert (to your sins), we shall revert (to our punishment), and we made Hell a prison for those who reject (all faith)."*** (Al Israa': 8)

That is to say if the children of Israel are to spread corruption again on earth, Allah will raise against them other people of His bondmen to ravage and humiliate them. They will enter the temple the way they entered it the first time, and will annihilate utterly whatever they got Exalted over. If they are to return to sins and corruption, Allah will cause them to suffer humiliation in this world in addition to the severe chastisement they will receive in the Hereafter: ***"And we have made Hell a prison for those who reject (all) faith"***. (Al Israa': 8)

The Reconstruction of Jerusalem:

Allah the Almighty says in *Surah*, "Al-Baqarah", ***"Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a town."*** The one referred to in this verse, as Wahb Ibn Munabih states, is Armiyyah Ibn Halqiyyah (Jeremiah), an Israelite Prophet.

However, it is reported on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas, Qatadah, and As-Suddyy that he is Ezra, an Israelite saint, but according to Ibn Katheer, he is Ezra. As for the town, the correct opinion is that it is Jerusalem.

It is reported that Ezra passed by Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed it and killed its people. He found it completely devastated and all in ruins. Upon seeing the destruction of the whole city, he, in despair, said, ***"Oh, how shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after its death?"*** Thereupon Allah caused him to die a hundred years and then brought him back. Seventy years after his death, the town was reconstructed and repopulated as the children of Israel went back to it.

When Allah raised Ezra from the dead, he brought life back to his eyes at first, so that he might see how Allah brings life to the rest of his body. Having got his life back, he was asked by an angel, ***"How long did you tarry (thus)?"*** He said, "(perhaps) a day or part of a day." This is because Allah had taken his life in the morning and brought it back to him at sunset, so, when he opened his eyes, he saw the sun and imagined that he slept only for a day or part of a day. ***"He (the angel) said, 'Nay, you have tarried thus a hundred years: but look at your food and your drink; they show no sign of age: and look at your Donkey: and that we may make of you a sign unto the people.' "*** The angel ordered Ezra to look at his food and drink, as he was taking some grapes, figs, and juice in his basket. He found them intact and as fresh as they were when he last saw them. The angel further commanded him to ponder how Allah restores life to the Donkey and reunites its bones after they were scattered. ***"And look further at the bones, how we bring them together and clothe them with flesh."*** (Al Baqarah: 209)

As-Suddyy and others state: The bones of Ezra's Donkey were scattered in different directions. Then Allah caused the wind to blow and gather the scattered bones from every corner. Thereupon He ordered that the bones be reunited until the Donkey was merely pieces of bones with no flesh over. After that, Allah clothed the Donkey with flesh and provided it with nerves, veins, and skin. Then he ordered an angel to blow into the nostrils of the Donkey until it brayed. All these things happened before Ezra's eyes. ***"When this was shown clearly to him, he said, I know that Allah has power over all things."*** (Al Baqarah: 209)

Is-haaq Ibn Bishr states: Ezra mounted his donkey until he entered his house. He saw a hundred and twenty-year-old blind crippled woman who worked as a maid there. He asked her, " Is this the house of Ezra?" "Yes," she replied. She burst into tears and then said, " People have long forgotten Ezra." Thereupon he said, " I am Ezra. Allah caused me to die for a hundred years and then brought me back to life." "Glory be to Allah!" she exclaimed. Then she said, to him, "But we lost Ezra a hundred years ago and we no longer heard of him." Thereupon he said, "I am Ezra." To ascertain that, she said, "Ezra used to be answered when he prayed to Allah. He used to pray for the sick and the distressed so that they may be cured and relieved. If you are indeed Ezra, then pray for me so that I may recover my eyesight. Thereupon Ezra massaged her eyes and prayed for her and her sight was restored to her. He, then, took her by the hand and said, "Get up by the will of Allah." Immediately after this, she stood up and walked as if she was untied. In consequence, she looked at Ezra and said, "I bear witness that you are Ezra." After that, she rushed to the assembly of the Israelites. Ezra's son was 118-year man; and his grandsons now were chiefs of the assembly. She said, to them, "This is Ezra coming back to you." When they accused

her of lying, she said, "I am your old maid. He has prayed to Allah for me, and I have regained my sight. He claims that Allah caused him to die for a hundred years and then brought him back to life." Upon this, people got up and looked at Ezra. His son said, "My father had a black mole between his shoulders." Thereupon he disclosed his shoulders and they found the mole. The Israelites further said, "None among us memorized the Torah since Nebuchadnezzar burnt it, save Ezra. So write it to us if you are truly Ezra. On the other hand, Sarukha (Ezra's father) buried the Torah in the days of Nebuchadnezzar in a place which was known only to Ezra. Thereupon Ezra led the people to that place and took out the Torah from the ground. But the paper had rotten and the book perished. Ezra sat in the shade of a tree and the Israelites clustered around him. While sitting with Ezra, two shooting stars fell down from the sky and pierced his heart causing a revival of his memory. Thereupon he copied out the Torah for them. Henceforth, the Jews began to call Ezra the son of Allah, due to the two shooting stars which fell from the sky, and because he copied out the Torah and struggled for the Israelites' cause."

Commenting on the verse: ***"And that we may make of thee a sign unto the people"***, Ibn `Abbaas states: Allah made of Ezra a sign for the Israelites, as he was young sitting with his aged children. For Allah had taken the life of Ezra when he was forty and brought him back to life at the same age he died.

Ibn `Asaakir reports: Ibn `Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, asked `Abdullaah Ibn Salaam about Allah's saying: ***"And the Jews said, that Ezra is the son of Allah?"*** Ibn Salaam told him that the reason was that he copied out the Torah for them. The Israelites said, "Moses could not convey the Torah except from a book, whereas Ezra copied it from his memory." That is why they call Ezra a son of Allah."

THE STORY OF ZECHARIAH (ZAKARIYYAH) AND JOHN (YAHYA), PEACE BE UPON BOTH OF THEM

Allah the Almighty says: " *Kaf. Ha. Ya. Ain. Saad. (This is) a recital of the mercy of thy Lord to his servant Zakariyyah. Behold! He cried to his Lord in secret, praying: " O my Lord! Infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey: but never am I unblest, O my Lord, in my prayer to thee! Now I fear (what) my relatives (and colleagues) (will do) after me: But my wife is barren: so give me an heir as from thyself (one that) will (truly) represent me, and represent the prosperity of Jacob; and make him, O my Lord, one with whom thou art well-pleased!" (His prayer was answered): "O Zakariyyah! We give thee good news of a son: his name shall be Yahya: on none by that name have we conferred distinction before. He said, "O My Lord! How shall I have a son when my wife is barren and I have grown quite decrepit from old age?" He said, "So (it will be): thy Lord saith " that is easy for me: I did indeed create thee before when thou hadst been nothing!" (Zakariyyah) said, "O my Lord, give me a sign." "(Thy Sign,)" was the answer, "shall that thou shalt speak to no man for three nights, although thou art no dumb. So, Zakariyyah came out to his people from his chamber: he told them by signs to celebrate Allah's praises in the morning and in the evening. (To his son came the command):"O Yahya! Take hold of the book with might": and We gave him wisdom even as a youth, and pity (for all creatures) as from Us, and purity: he was devout, and kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious. So peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!"*(Maryam: 1-15)

In another *Surah*, Allah the Almighty says: " *To the care*

of Zakariyyah was she assigned. Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: " O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?" She said: "from Allah, for Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure." There did Zakariyyah prayed to his Lord, saying: " O my Lord! Grant unto me from thee a progeny that is pure: for thou art He that heareth prayer! While he was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called unto him: "Allah doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya, witnessing the truth of a word from Allah, and "be besides" noble, chaste, and a Prophet - of the (goodly) company of the righteous." He said, "Oh my Lord! How shall I have a son, seeing I am very old, and my wife is barren?" "Thus," was the answer, "doth Allah accomplish what He willeth." He said, "O my Lord! Give me a Sign!" " Thy Sign", was the answer, " shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days but with signals. Then celebrate the praises of thy Lord again and again, and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning." (Ali `Imraan: 37- 41)

He also says: *"And (remember) Zakariyyah, when he cried to his Lord: "O my Lord! Leave me not without offspring, though thou art the best of inheritors." So we listened to him: and we granted him Yahya: we cured his wife's (barrenness) for him. These (three) were ever quick in emulation in good works; they used to call on us with love and reverence, and humble themselves before us."* (Al Anbiyaa': 89-90)

He moreover says, *"And Zakariyyah, John, and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the Righteous."* (Al An`aam: 85)

THE STORY OF ZECHARIAH (ZAKARIYYAH), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Ibn Katheer states: Zechariah, peace be upon, him was a great Prophet of the Israelites. Allah mentions his story: He granted him offspring though he was aged and his wife was barren and stricken with years. This was done so that one might not despair of Allah's Mercy and Bounty. In this respect, Allah the Almighty says: ***"(This is) a recital of the mercy of thy Lord to his servant Zakariyyah. Behold! He cried to his Lord in secret."*** He prayed to Allah in secret because it is the most beloved form of supplication to Allah.

Some early Muslims mention that Zechariah got up late at night while his companions were sleeping. He supplicated to Allah in secret so that no one of his companions would hear him. He prayed, "O my Lord! O my Lord! O my Lord!" Thereupon Allah said, "Ask and I will respond. Ask and I will respond. Ask and I will respond." Zechariah then supplicated, " O my Lord! Infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey: but never am I unblest, O my Lord, in my prayer to thee!" i.e., I have grown in years and my hair has turned grey, but I used to be answered when I prayed to you. On the other hand, Zechariah was made a guardian over Mary, daughter of `Imran, son of Mathaan. Whenever he entered her chamber to see her, he found hat she had out-of-season fruit. He then came to know that the one who provided out-of- season fruits is indeed able to grant him offspring even though he is aged. So Zechariah stretched his hands towards the heaven and prayed to Allah. Allah says, There did Zakariyyah prayed to his Lord, saying: ***" O my Lord! Grant unto me from thee a progeny that is pure: for thou art He that heareth prayer!"***

Zechariah, peace be upon him, said, ***"Now I fear (what)***

my relatives (and colleagues) (will do) after me: But my wife is barren: so give me an heir as from thyself (one that) will (truly) represent me, and represent the prosperity of Jacob; and make him, O my Lord, one with whom thou art well-pleased!" (Maryam: 6)

It was said that Zechariah feard least his relatives and colleagues would rule the Israelites in contradiction to the Law of Allah after he passed away. So he prayed to Allah so that he might bestow on him a son to inherit his kingdom and Prophetic office. The inheritance referred to in the foregoing verses does not, as some people claim, stand for property and riches, due to following reasons:

First, when tackling the verse: ***"And Solomon was David's heir"*** (Al Naml: 16), we have stated that inheritance stands for kingdom and Prophethood according to the authentic *Hadith* in which it was reported that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, had said, *"Our property, we the chain of Prophets, is not to be inherited, and whatever we leave is to be given to charity."*

On the ground of this *Hadith*, Caliph Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, banned the property of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, to be transferred to his heirs (his daughter Fatimah, his nine wives, and his uncle Al-`Abbaas), may Allah be pleased with them all. `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab, `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan, `Ali Ibn Abi Taalib, Al-`Abbaas Ibn `Abdul Muttalib, `Abdul-Rahmaan Ibn `Awf, Talha, Az-Zubair, Abu Hurairah and other Companions of the Prophet, may Allah be pleased with them, all agreed to the action of Abu Bakr.

Second, At-Tirmidhi narrates the same *Hadith* in general words: *"We, the chain of Prophets, are not to be inherited (in*

terms of property)".

Third, life, in the eyes of Prophets, was so low that they did not care about accumulating riches, and as such, they were in no need of asking there sons to inherit what they had accumulated.

Fourth, Zechariah, peace be upon him, was a carpenter who used to earn his livelihood by working with his own hands, as it was the case with David, peace be upon both of them. Such person is not supposed to heap up money.

Allah the Almighty then says: ***"O Zakariyyah! We give thee good news of a son: his name shall be Yahya: on none by that name have we conferred distinction before."*** (Maryam: 7) This verse means that the name 'Yahya' was not given to any one before him. It may also mean, as some scholars state, that no one was made equal to him. The latter explanation finds expressions in another verse where Allah the Almighty says: ***"While he was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called unto him: "Allah doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya, witnessing the truth of a word from Allah, and "be besides" noble, chaste, and a Prophet - of the (goodly) company of the righteous."*** (Ali `Imraan: 39)

Having been given the glad tidings of a son, Zechariah asked in wonder, ***"O My Lord! How shall I have a son when my wife is barren and I have grown quite decrepit from old age?"*** i.e., How can I beget children while my wife is infertile and I am very old?! Zechariah's answer was extremely similar to that of Abraham, peace be upon them, when he was also the given good news that he would beget a child. Abraham said, ***"Do ye give me such glad tidings even though old age has seized me? Of what, then, is your good news?"*** His wife Sara, by the same token, said, ***"Alas for me! Shall I bear a child,***

seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing! They said, " Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O ye people of the house! For He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!" (Hood: 72-3)

Now the prayer of Zechariah was answered. The angels said, to him, ***"thy Lord saith "*** that is easy for me: I did indeed create thee before when thou hadst been nothing!" i.e., I have created you after you were nothing; would I not be able to make you beget a child even though you are aged! In another verse, Allah the Almighty says: ***"So We listened to him: and We granted him Yahya: We cured his wife's (barrenness) for him. These three were ever quick in emulation in good works: they used to call with love and reverence, and humble themselves before us."*** (Al Anbiyaa': 89-90)

After that, Zechariah asked his Lord to give him a sign in order that his heart might be at ease: ***"O my Lord! Give me a sign.*** "Thy sign," ***was the answer,*** "shall that thou shalt speak to no man for three nights, although thou art not dumb.' The sign was that Zechariah would not be able to speak to people, except with signals, for three nights, although he was not dumb nor had a speech defect. Then Zechariah was ordered to celebrate the praises of his Lord again and again and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning. Having been given the sign, Zechariah came out to his people from his chamber and signified to them either by writing or signaling, to glorify Allah at daybreak and in the still of the night: ***"So Zechariah came out to his people from his chamber: he told them by signs to celebrate Allah's praises in the morning and in the evening."*** (Maryam: 11)

THE STORY OF JOHN (YAHYA), PEACE BE UPON HIM

Allah the Almighty says: ***"O Yahya! Take hold of the book with might: and We gave him wisdom even as a youth. And pity (for all creatures) as from Us, and purity: he was devout, and kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious."*** (Maryam: 12-4) According to Ibn Katheer, Allah answered the prayer of Zechariah and bestowed on him a son; John, peace be upon him. While he was young, Allah taught John the Torah which was studied among people, and the Prophets used to judge the Jews, the rabbis, and the priests by the standards thereof. That is why Allah mentioned His name and his favors upon him and his parents .He says, ***"O Yahya! Take hold of the book with might"*** i.e., study the Scripture (the Torah) carefully and seriously. ***"And We gave him wisdom even as a youth, and pity (for all creatures) as from Us."*** Qatadah states: Out of mercy on Zechariah, Allah bestowed on him a child. However, `Ikrimah states that Allah bestowed on Zechariah a son because he loved him. Ibn Katheer, on the other hand, suggests: It may be a distinguishing attribute of John that he had pity for all creatures, particularly his parents. He was kind-hearted and devout to them. — ***"and purity"*** i.e. purification of his manners and clarity of faults and vice . ***"And he was devout, and kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious"*** meaning he was obedient to Allah, adhering to his commands and staying clear of his prohibitions. He, moreover, was so obedient to his parents and never showed disrespect towards them, neither by an action nor a word.

Allah the Almighty next says: ***"So peace on Him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)"*** (Maryam: 15) The three times mentioned in the verse are the most difficult for man to bear.

Man leaves one state after he got used to it to face another, which he finds strange. He leaves the tender bowels of his mother to come to the world, face its sorrows and undergo its woes. That is why a baby cries when it is delivered. By the same token, man leaves the world with its pleasure and luxury to be carried to the grave and pass through the trials of death. There in his grave, he awaits the moment when the horn is to be blown as sign of resurrection, then he stands before Allah's court of justice to receive his reckoning If the good deeds outweigh the evil ones, judgment will be in man's favor, and he will be ushered into a life of ultimate pleasure and satisfaction. But he whose balance of good deeds will be found light will have his home in a bottomless pit. In this respect, a poet says,

O Man! Your mother bore you crying
But people around you were laughing
So strive to be, when you are dying,
So pleased when people are wailing.

Hence, Allah spared John any kind of hardship in each of these three difficult occasions mentioned above.

Allah next says: ***"And (besides) noble, chaste, and a Prophet of the (goodly) company of the righteous,"*** Ali 'Imraan: 39), Al-Qaadi 'Eyaad states: ***"Chaste"*** means infallible; never committed any sin. Ibn Katheer expounds on the verse saying: this is a praise for John that he is immunized against grave and minor sins alike, Ibn Katheer went on to dispel misconceptions that John was impotent, John's infallibility did not hinder him from marriage, and having sexual intercourse, and begetting children. Moreover, we understand that he had offspring from Zechariah's prayer for him: ***" O my Lord! Grant unto me from thee a progeny that is pure: for thou art that hearth prayer."*** Ibn Katheer explains: It means grant me many offspring's and descendants. Allah the Almighty knows best.

Allah the Almighty then says, ***"And a Prophet, of the (good by) company of the righteous"*** (Ali `Imraan: 39) This is another glad tiding concerning John's Prophethood which was more superior than that of his birth, just it was the case with the mother of Moses, when Allah the Almighty revealed to her: " (Al Qasas: 7).

Imam Ahmad reports on the authority of Al-Haarith Al-Ash`ari that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Allah ordered John, the son of Zechariah to carry out five orders and ask the children of Israel to follow suit. As he was well-nigh to procrastinate the promulgation of those orders, Jesus, peace be upon him, said to him, "You have been ordered (by Allah) to carry out five orders and ask the children of Israel to follow suit, so, you must convey the orders, otherwise, I will convey them to the people. Thereupon John said, "My brother! I fear if you are to outdo, Allah may pour his Wrath upon me and cause the earth to swallow me." John went and assembled the children of Israel in the Holy Mosque of Jerusalem until it was completely full. Then sat on the window and offered thanks to Allah and said, "Allah, Exalted be he, ordered me to carry out five orders and ask you to follow suit. First: You must worship Him alone and ascribe no associate with Him. Like a man who bought a slave with his pure money or gold, then the slave used to work and pay the profit to others than his master. Who amongst you can accept this from his slave? By the same token, Allah has created you and provided you with sustenance. So you must worship him alone and ascribe no associate with him. Second: You must perform prayer, for Allah looks at His servant while praying unless he turns his face to another direction, so if you pray, do not turn your eyes (to none but Allah). Third: You must observe fasting. This resembles a man who has a packet of musk whose aroma is smelt by people surrounding him. Such is the case*

with fasting; "The Khuluf[1] is better in Allah's sight than the fragrance of musk." Fourth: You should give charity. This is likened to a man who has been held captive by the enemy. They then pulled him by the hand and placed him in a place to be put to death. Thereupon he said, "May I pay you in order to set me free?" He then paid them a lot of money until they set him free. Fifth: You should remember Allah, Exalted be He, frequently. This is like a man whom the enemy was chasing. They traced his footsteps, but he hid in a fortified place. Such is the case with a person who remembers Allah, Exalted be He; the devil has no way to penetrate into his heart. " The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, added, "I (too) order you to carry out five things which Allah ordered me to carry out: Sticking to the Muslim community, hearing, obeying, immigrating, and striving for the cause of Allah. Whoever budges an inch away from the Muslim community has relinquished Islam until he returns back. And whoever revives the customs of the pre-Islamic period (Jahiliyyah) deserves hell. The companions of the Prophet asked, "Messenger of Allah! Even if he performs prayer and observes fasting?" Thereupon the Prophet replied, "Even if he prays and fasts for he only pretends to be Muslim." For the (true) Muslim, as Allah the Almighty mentions, is the one who submits to Allah, believes in Him and is a servant of Allah."

Ibn Katheer states: Narrations differ as to whether Zechariah, peace be upon him, died a natural death or was killed. According to one narration, Zechariah fled from his people and entered into a tree. The people came and sawed the tree and when the saw touched Zechariah's rib, he groaned. Thereupon Allah said, You are to stop groaning or I will turn the entire globe upside down. At that time, Zechariah stopped groaning until he was cut into two halves. Another narration maintains that Zechariah died a natural death, and it was Shaiya who was cut into halves.

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[1] *Khuluf* is the change in the breath of the mouth due to fasting. (trans.)

THE STORY OF JESUS ('EESA), PEACE BE UPON HIM

His Birth:

Ibn Katheer states: He is Jesus, the son of Mary. He is Allah's bondman and Messenger. In the beginning of *Surah*, "Ali `Imraan", Allah, Exalted be He, revealed eighty three verses to refute the claims of Christians who called Jesus the son of Allah, far be Allah from all these claims. Ibn Katheer goes on to say that a Christian delegation from Najraan came to Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. They mentioned that they believe in the Trinity and claimed that Allah is one of three; the Divine Being, Jesus, and Mary. Then Allah, Exalted be He, revealed the beginning of *Surah*, "Ali-`Imraan" pointing out that Jesus is but a servant of Allah whom He created and fashioned in a womb as He did with other creatures; He created him without a human father just as Adam was born without either a human father or mother. Rather Allah just said be and he was. Allah also explains the birth of Jesus' mother, Mary and how she became pregnant with him, a story which was elucidated in *Surah*, "Maryam".

The Birth of Mary, Peace Be Upon Her:

Almighty Allah says: ***"Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of 'Imran above all people, Offspring, one of the other: And Allah hearth and knoweth all things. Behold! A woman of 'Imran said, " O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: so accept this of me: for Thou hearest and knowest all things." When she was delivered, she said: 'O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"-And Allah knew best what she brought forth- "and is no wise the male***

like the female. I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from Evil One, the Rejected." Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: To the care of Zakariyyah was she assigned. Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said," O Mary! Where (comes) this to you?" She said," From Allah: For Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure." (Ali `Imraan: 33-7)

Almighty Allah had chosen Adam, peace be upon him; He created him Himself, breathed into him of His spirit, ordered His angles to prostrate themselves before him, taught him the names of all things, made him dwell in paradise, and then caused him to come down to earth for a certain reason which no one knows but Allah. He also chose Noah (Nooh), peace be upon him, and made him the first Prophet sent to mankind. He sent him when people worshipped idols and ascribed many associates with Allah in His divinity. As Noah tarried a long time calling his people day and night, openly and secretly, but his call only caused them to grow more repugnant, he prayed to Allah so that He might punish them. As a result, Allah drowned them, save those who followed Noah, peace be upon him. Likewise, Allah chose the family of Abraham from whom descended the children of Ismael and the most honored and the seal of Prophets, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, moreover, chose the family of 'Imran, the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus, peace be upon him. There is no disagreement over the fact that Mary is a descendant of David, peace be upon him. Her father Imraan was the leader of prayer among the Israelites during his time. Her mother, Hannah bint (daughter of) Faqood, was a devout worshipper. Zechariah, according to the majority of scholars was the Prophet of that time. He was the husband of Isaiah (Ashiaa`),

sister of Mary. Some other scholars maintain that Zechariah was a husband of Isaiah's maternal aunt, Allah knows best.

Almighty Allah says: ***"Behold! A woman of 'Imran said, "O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: so accept this of me: for Thou hearest and knowest all things."*** (Ali `Imraan: 35) Muhammad Ibn Is-haaq and others state: Mary's mother was barren. One day she saw a bird feeding its young baby, and consequently, felt eager to beget children. So she vowed that if she became pregnant, she would devote her baby to Allah; to be a bondwoman of the Al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem). She immediately menstruated, and when she became clean, her husband had intercourse with her and Mary, peace be upon her was conceived.

Almighty Allah says: ***"When she was delivered, she said: 'O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"- And Allah knew best what she brought forth- and is no wise the male like the female."*** Ibn Katheer explains: From the viewpoint of physical strength and the service of Al-Aqsa Mosque, it was said that people at that time were in the habit of devoting their children as servants to Al-Aqsa Mosque. The wife of Imraan said, ***"I have named her Mary."*** Scholars consider this verse an evidence on the lawfulness of naming one's baby on the birthday; this is a ruling which was stipulated in the laws preceding Islam and was retained by Islamic Shari 'ah. Al-Bukhari mentioned that a man said to the Prophet," O Messenger of Allah! My wife has begotten a baby, what name do you order me to call him?" "Name him Abdur Rahmaan," said the Prophet. It was also mentioned in the two *Saheehs* that Anas Ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, took his brother upon his birth to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Prophet named him `Abdullaah.

Ibn Katheer states: Ahmad, and At-Tirmidhi and others narrated on the authority of Samura Ibn Jundub that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said," *Every new-born child should be greeted on the 7th day after his birth with a welcoming feast, should be given name and has his/her hair should be shaved."*

The wife of Imraan said, ***"And I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from Evil One, the Rejected."*** This means she took refuge in Allah from the evils of Satan and sought Allah's protection for her child, Jesus, peace be upon him. Allah then answered her call; as it is reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said," *Whenever a child is born, Satan touches it. A child, therefore, cries loudly at the time of birth because of the touch of Satan, except Mary and her child." Then Abu Hurairah said," Recite, if you wish, Allah's saying,"* ***And I seek refuge in Thee for her and for her offspring from the outcast Satan."*** *Allah says,"* ***Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: To the care of Zechariah."***

Exegetes of the Qur'an mention that her mother wrapped her in clothes upon her birth and went to the mosque and gave her to the worshippers. It is most likely that she gave her to them after her weaning period. Being a daughter of their Imam, they vied which of them would be honored with being her guardian. They drew lots, and it was decided in Zechariah's favor. He was the Prophet at that time. Then Mary was raised under Zechariah's wing. Allah says in another verse," ***This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which We reveal unto thee (O Prophet) by inspiration: thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows, as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary: nor wast thou with them when***

they disputed (the point)." (Ali 'Imraan: 44)

Ibn Katheer mentions: Everyone drew his pen and a young boy was ordered to choose the lot. Then the boy selected a pen which was Zechariah's. They asked for another lot in which they would throw their pens in water and the pen which would swim against the tide was to be considered the winner. Upon throwing their pens, Zechariah's pen swam against the tide, but they asked for a third lot in which they would throw their pens in the river and the one which would swim with the tide was to be regarded as a winner. They did so, and it was decided in Zechariah's favor. So Zechariah was charged with the care of Mary.

Zechariah then allocated for her a certain place for worship and allowed no one to enter that place except himself. There, Mary used to worship Allah day and night. She took part in the mosque service. She continued to do so until she became the exemplar of piety amongst the Israelites. She was renowned for her unique qualities and good morals. Whenever Zechariah entered her chamber of worship, he found that she had out-of-season fruit. Allah, in this respect, says:" ***Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said," O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?' She said, 'From Allah: For Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure.'*** (Ali `Imraan: 37) At that time, Zechariah hoped for a son even if he was gray with years. He said," ***O My Lord! Grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure, for Thou art He that hearth prayer!"***

Mary Being Chosen by Allah:

Almighty Allah says: " ***Behold! The angles said, " O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee - chosen thee above the women of all nations. O Mary! Worship thy lord***

devoutly: prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down. This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which we reveal unto thee (O Prophet!) by inspiration : thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows, as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary: nor wast thou with them when they disputed (the point.) Behold! The angel said: 'O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from him: his name will be Christ Jesus. The son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah; he shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity and he shall be (of the company of) of the righteous.' She said, ' O my lord! How shall I have as son when no man hath touched me?' He said, 'Even so: Allah createth what he willeth: when He hath decreed a Plan, He but saith to it "Be" and it is! And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, and (appoint him) a messenger to the Children of Israel (with this message): I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay - as it were, the figure a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave and I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe. (I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me." It is Allah who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a way that is straight." (Ali `Imraan: 42-51)

Ibn Katheer states: Almighty Allah chose Mary from amongst the women of her time; He made her bear a child without a human father, and gave her glad tidings that he would be a Prophet: ***"held in honor in this world and the Hereafter***

and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah " meaning he will have a dignified status in Allah's sight in this world as he received a message from Allah and in the Hereafter as he will intercede in favor of those Allah allows him to. "***He shall speak to the people in childhood***" i.e., in his infancy. He performed a miracle when he called people to worship Allah and ascribe no partner with him. "***And in maturity*** " meaning when he is adult.

Mary, peace be upon her, was ordered by Allah to increase worship, prayer, bowing, and prostration to Him so that she might be qualified for such a bliss, and that she might be grateful to Allah. The angels said to her, " ***O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee - chosen thee above the women of all nations.*** " That is to say Allah selected Mary, cleared her from vices, granted her lofty morals and made her the best woman of all nations. It may also mean that she was made superior to the women of her time, as it was the case with Moses and the children of Israel. Concerning Moses, Allah, Exalted be He, says, " ***O Moses! I have chosen thee above other men*** " (Al 'Ar`aaf: 144) and regarding the children of Israel, He says, " ***And we chose them aforetime above the nations knowingly.*** " (Al-Dukhan: 32) It is known that Abraham, peace be upon him, was made better than Moses, and Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was made better than both. By the same token, the Muslim nation has been made better than the ones preceding it in terms of number, knowledge and good deeds.

Again the verse may also mean that Mary was chosen above all women preceding and following her. Some scholars, like Ibn Hazm, state that Mary was a Prophetess, since the angels inspired her. They also state that Sara, the wife of Abraham, peace be upon him, was a Prophetess. However, the

majority of scholars maintain that Prophethood is a distinctive feature of men and not women, and that the lofty status of Mary is clarified in Allah's saying, " ***Christ the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth.*** "(Al Maa'idah: 75) As a matter of fact, Mary is one of the four perfect women, the other three being Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, Khadeejah, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, and Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad.

Ibn `Abbaas reported that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, had drawn four lines and said, " *Do you know what these are?" Thereupon the Companions of the Prophet said, " Allah and His Prophet know best." He answered, " The best women of paradise shall be Khadeejah bint Khuwailid, Fatimah bint Muhammad, Maryam (Mary) bint `Imraan, and Asiya bint Muzahem, the wife of Pharaoh."* Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari also narrated that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, " *Perfect men are many, whereas perfect women are only the following: Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, Mary the daughter of 'Imr'an, and the superiority of `A'ishah to other women is like that of meat to other kinds of food."*

The Birth of Jesus (`Eesa), Peace Be upon Him:

Allah the Almighty says: ***"Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said, ' I seek refuge from thee to (Allah) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah.' He said, ' Nay, I am only a Messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son.' She said, ' How***

shall I have a son seeing that no man has touched me and I am not unchaste?' He said, 'So (it will be): thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': it is a matter (so) decreed.' So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree: she cried (in her anguish): 'Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!' But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm tree), ' Grieve not! For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee; and shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm tree; it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man, say, ' I have vowed a fast to (Allah) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being ' At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said, ' O Mary! Truly an amazing thing hast thou brought! O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother unchaste!' But she pointed to the babe. They said, ' How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle? ' He said, 'I am indeed a servant of Allah: He has given me Revelation and made me a Prophet; And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live: (He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable; so Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the Day that I shall be raised up to life (again)'! Such was Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, ' Be, ' and it is. Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight. The sects differ among themselves: and woe to the

Unbelievers, because of the (coming) Judgment of a momentous Day!" (Maryam: 16-37)

Ibn Katheer explains: Allah the Almighty mentions this story after the story of Zechariah which acts as a prelude, leading up to it. Allah similarly mentions the two of them in *Surah*, "Ali `Imraan" within a single context. In *Surah*, "Al Anbiya'", Allah the Almighty says: ***"And (remember) Zechariah when he cried to his Lord: ' O my Lord! Leave me not without offspring, though Thou art the best of inheritors.' so We listened to him: and We granted him Yahya: We cured his wife's (barrenness) for him. These (three) were ever quick in emulation in good works; they used to call on Us with love and reverence, and humble themselves before Us. And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples.*** " (Al Anbiyaa': 89-91)

Thus Allah the Almighty narrates that when the Angels brought the news to Mary, peace be upon her, that Allah had chosen her, and that He will grant her a holy son who will be a gracious, sinless Prophet supported by miracles, she wondered at the possibility of begetting a child without a father, as she did not have a husband. The Angels then told her that Allah is capable of effecting whatsoever He wills. When He decrees a matter, he says to it, ***"Be and it is"***. She thus accepted what she was told and yielded to the Will of Allah.

Mary never left the mosque except while menstruating or on account of some necessity such as to get water or food. One day she went out for a particular purpose and ***"she withdrew from her family to a place in the East."*** She retreated to a place east of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. ***"She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them;"*** i.e. she went into

hiding. Then, Allah sent to her the Holy Spirit, Gabriel, ***"and he appeared before her as a man in all respects"*** meaning in the form of an utterly perfect man. When she saw him, ***"She said, ' I seek refuge from thee to (Allah) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah.' "*** She suspected that he was after her, so she reminded him of Allah and His inescapable punishment. ***"He said, ' Nay, I am only a Messenger from thy Lord,"*** that is to say, I am not human being, but an angel sent by Allah to you. ***"(To announce) to thee the gift of a holy son.' "*** i.e. a holy boy. ***"She said, ' How shall I have a son"*** meaning how can I give birth to a son ***"seeing that no man has touched me"*** *i.e. when I have no husband* ***"and I am not unchaste?"*** meaning she was never a fornicator. (Maryam: 16-20)

The angel answered her, ***"He said, 'So (it will be): thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me:"*** i.e. this would be a simple job for Allah to do. He has power to do whatsoever He wills. ***"And (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men"*** meaning his creation and birth, peculiar as it is, will be evidence of Allah's ability to effect all kinds of creation, as He, the Almighty, created Adam with no man or woman involved, created Eve from a man with no woman involved, created Jesus from a woman with no man involved and created the rest of the human race from both sexes. ***"And a Mercy from Us:"*** meaning Jesus will be a means of salvation for people by calling on them to worship only Allah, both as an infant and as an adult. ***"It is a matter (so) decreed."*** (Maryam: 21) This may be the completion of Gabriel's words to Mary, meaning that this issue was decreed and ordained by Allah.

Conversely, it could also be the words of Allah, Exalted be He, addressing his Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and they refer inadvertently to Gabriel's

breathing into her of Allah's Spirit, and Allah the Almighty says in another verse, ***"And Mary the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of his Revelations, and was one of the Devout (Servants)."*** (Al-Tahrim: 12)

Many of the early Muslims (As-Salaf As-Saalih) mention that Gabriel, peace be upon him, breathed into the pockets of Mary's mail, and that breath found its way to her vulva causing her to conceive right away just as all women do after sexual intercourse with their husbands. ***"So she conceived him,"*** i.e. she conceived her baby ***"and she retired with him to a remote place"*** because when Mary, peace be upon her, became pregnant, she was troubled as she knew that many people would doubt her chastity. (Maryam: 22)

Wahb Ibn Munabih states: When signs of pregnancy began to show on Mary, a man from the Israeli worshippers was first to perceive them. This surprised him immensely, as he was aware she was pious, chaste and devout. One day, he broached the issue to her saying, "Could there be a plant stemming from no seed, Mary?" She answered, "Yes, who created the very first plant?" He answered, "Could a tree grow with no water or rain?" She answered, "Yes, who created the very first tree?" He asked, " Could a child be created without being conceived by a man?" She replied, "Yes, Allah created Adam from no man or woman." He said, "Tell me then your story. " She said, "Allah has broken the news to me, ***"a word from him: his name will be Christ Jesus. The son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah; he shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity and he shall be (of the company of) of the righteous."*** (Ali `Imraan: 45-6)

Exegetes of the Qur'an mention: One day Mary walked by Zechariah's wife who was then expecting a child; John, after Allah had answered her husband's prayer. She asked her, "Do you know that I am pregnant, Mary?" Mary replied, "And do you know that I am pregnant, too?" Then, she told her about her story and all that happened to her. Zechariah and his wife were devout worshippers who had strong faith in Allah. From that time, whenever Zechariah's wife met Mary, she would tell her, "I can see my unborn baby (i.e., John, peace be upon him) kneeling down in prostration to your unborn baby (i.e. Jesus, peace be upon him)." Ibn Katheer states: Prostration here signifies submission and reverence. According to their religion, prostrating oneself was permitted as a way of greeting. Joseph's father and brothers prostrated themselves to him. However, this has been made unlawful in Islam so that the reverence and glorification of Allah, Exalted be He, would be unimpaired.

Exegetes of the Qur'an differ as to the duration of the term of Mary's conception. The majority state that Mary carried her child to a full term of nine months as all women do, because had there been a different story, it would have been mentioned. It was also mentioned that once she conceived her baby, she gave birth to him. This is obviously based on the surface meaning of Allah's verse, "***So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree***", "***So***" here signifies succession.

Muhammad Ibn Is-haaq states: The word spread among the Jews that Mary was pregnant. No people suffered what the people of Zechariah's house did. Some of the unbelievers accused her of having an affair with Joseph Al-Nagaar, a pious man of her relations who used to join her in the mosque worshipping Allah. Thus, Mary went into seclusion,

withdrawing from people, and retreated to a faraway place.

Allah the Almighty says, ***"And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree:"*** Ibn Katheer states: Going into labor, Mary sought the trunk of a palm tree for support in the place to which she retreated. Where this place is located was not unanimously agreed upon. It is generally accepted that it is at Bethlehem, eight miles away from Jerusalem. ***"She cried (in her anguish):, 'Ah ! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight.' "*** This proves that wishing for death in times of trials is permitted. Mary knew people would doubt her chastity when she would go back home with a baby in her arms, though they knew that she was a pious worshipper who was constantly in a state of retreat in the mosque, and that she came from a devout family of Prophets. That was why she was extremely troubled that she wished she had died before that time or that she ***"had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"*** meaning she wished she was never born at all. (Maryam: 23)

Allah the Almighty says, ***"But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm tree),"*** Mujahid and Al-Hasan state that it was her son, Jesus, peace be upon him, who called her, whereas As-Souddyy, Qatadah and Ibn `Abbaas maintain that it was Gabriel, peace be upon him, who did and that the first time Jesus ever talked was in the presence of the people. ***"Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;"*** Ibn `Abbaas explains that the rivulet is actually a small river. Ibn Katheer maintains: And the majority of scholars agree with him, and that is the most likely interpretation, that ***"and shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm tree;"*** means resort to it for support ***"the trunk of the palm tree;"*** It is suggested that it was a dry palm tree; others think that it was a fruitful tree but it is most likely that the tree was not in its fruiting season.

Therefore, it was out of Allah's Grace that Mary would find there food and water. ***"It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye."*** `Amr Ibn Maymoon once explicated this saying that no food is better for a woman undergoing her postnatal bleeding than dry dates and fresh ripe dates, then he recited this verse.

Allah the Almighty says," ***And if thou dost see any man,"*** Ibn Katheer explains: Allah means if you see anyone, this is the completion of the words of whoever addressed her. ***"say,"*** to him, i.e. with the aid of signs and gestures, and not using verbal words so as not to be in contradiction to ***" 'I have vowed a fast to (Allah) Most Gracious."*** By ***"a fast"*** she meant silence, ***"and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being ' "*** (Maryam: 25) Qatadah and As-Suddyy say, according to their religion, fasting meant abandoning both food and speaking. Ibn Katheer states: Conversely, in Islam, it is not recommended for a fasting person to remain silent all day long.

Allah Almighty says, ***"At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms)."*** Many of the early Muslims who narrate events and happenings of the People of the Book mention that when her people thought she was missing, they went to ask about her. They stopped by her dwelling place that was luminous and radiant. When they confronted her, they found her carrying her baby in her arms and told her, ***"' O Mary! Truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!' "*** Ibn Katheer states that, on the ground of the surface meaning of the context in the Glorious Qur'an, we understand that she carried the child herself and went back to her people with her baby in her arms. Ibn `Abbaas expounds on this saying that that took place forty days after her delivery when her postnatal bleeding came to a stop. When they saw her, they said, ***"O Mary! Truly an amazing thing hast thou***

brought! O sister of Aaron!' " (Maryam: 27) Sa'eed Ibn Gubair says that they likened her to a worshipper of their times called Aaron to whom she was an equal in piety. It is also claimed that the Aaron intended here was Moses' brother and they likened her to him on account of their devoutness. Ibn Katheer says: Muhammad Ibn Ka`b Al-Qarzey was wrong in claiming that she was the sister of Moses and Aaron by kinship, as they lived long before she ever did.

Next they said, ***"Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother unchaste!"*** meaning you come from a pious family known for their devoutness and righteousness. How could you do something like that? When they accused her of fornication and she was fasting that day, she pointed to her child, meaning they could talk to him. Allah the Almighty says, ***"But she pointed to the babe. They said, ' How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?' "*** i.e. how can you refer us to a child who does not understand speech, and he was an infant in his cradle? At this point, ***"He said, ' I am indeed a servant of Allah:' "*** These were the very first words that Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon him, ever uttered. He admitted his being a bondman of Allah, and deemed Him far above what stray people might claim, namely that he was the son of Allah. Jesus admitted his being His bondman, messenger and the son of His maid-servant. Next he acquitted his mother of what those in the dark accused her of and on account of one which they drove her out of town. Thus, he says, ***"He has given me Revelation and made me a Prophet;"*** (Maryam: 28-30) Allah does not make Prophets those whom He, as they claim, has cursed and condemned, as Allah elsewhere says, ***"That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge."*** (Al Nisaa': 156)

Jesus, peace be upon him, said, ***" And He has made me***

blessed wheresoever I be," because he calls on people to worship only Allah Who has no partner, to deem Him far from any defect and from having a wife nor a child. ***"And has enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live:"*** It is the duty of the people to perform their obligations towards Allah the Almighty the Praiseworthy by praying and by being charitable to people through paying the Zakah (obligatory charity). This purifies one's soul from vice and purifies one's money and riches by means of giving charity to the needy, who may fall under various categories. Then, he said," ***(He) hath made me kind to my mother"*** Many a time has Allah, Exalted be He, linked the commandment to worship Him with that of being dutiful to one's parents. ***"And not overbearing or miserable;"*** i.e. I am not harsh or coarse. Some of the predecessors say, whoever is not dutiful to his or her parents is always a wretched tyrant. ***"So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the Day that I shall be raised up to life (again)'!"*** (Maryam: 33) This is an evidence of his servitude to Allah, Exalted be He, and a proof that he, like all other creatures, lives, dies and will be resurrected. However, Allah ensured his safety through the very three stages, which are quite difficult for all people.

Then, Allah tells His Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, all having narrated to him the story of Jesus, peace be upon him, ***" Such was Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute."*** i.e. he is Allah's bondman born to a woman who, too, is Allah's bondman. Then, He deemed His Sacred Self far and above all defect. He says, ***"It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, ' Be, ' and it is."*** (Maryam: 34-5) meaning nothing is beyond His ability, He is the Sure Accomplisher of what He wills. Similarly, Allah says

in another verse, ***"The Truth (comes) from thy Lord alone; so be not of those who doubt."*** (Ali `Imraan: 59-60)

Jesus, peace be upon him, said, ***"Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight."*** This is the completion of his words to the people while in the cradle. He told them that Allah is his and their god and ordered them to worship Him. Allah the Almighty says, ***"The sects differ among themselves:"*** (Maryam: 36) People of the Book were of various views regarding Jesus. A group of them, namely the majority of the Jews, insisted that he was a bastard child. They persisted in their atheism and obstinacy and were severely cursed by Allah. Another group maintained that Jesus is God. He came down to earth, brought back to life some people, took the lives of others and then went back to heaven. This is the view of the Jacobites. Others, namely the Nestorians, claim that Jesus is the son of Allah. Others still maintained that Jesus is the third party of the Trinity: Allah is a god, he is a god, and his mother is a god. They are the Israelites, kings of the Christians. Others believe, he is Allah's bondman, messenger, spirit and word. This view is adopted by the Muslims.

Allah Almighty says, ***"and woe to the Unbelievers, because of the (coming) Judgment of a momentous Day!"*** (Maryam: 37) This is a strong threat and an ultimatum to whoever ascribes false allegations to Allah claiming He has a son. Allah the Almighty has given them a deadline till the Day of Judgment out of patience and confidence in His ability to subdue them. Allah, Exalted be He, never hastens the punishment of those who disobey him. Thus, it was mentioned in the two authentic books that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"Allah gives respite to a "zalim" (polytheist, wrong-doer, oppressors, etc.) but when He seizes*

(catches) him, He never releases him." Then Abu Musa, the narrator, may Allah be pleased with him, recited, ***"Such is the Seizure of your Lord when He seizes the (population of) towns while they are doing wrong: Verily, His seizure is painful, and severe. "*** (Hood: 102)

It is also mentioned in the two *Saheehs* that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him said, *"No one is more forbearing in listening to the most irksome things than Allah, the Exalted. They associate rivals with Him, attribute sonhood to Him but in spite of this He provides them with sustenance, grants them safety, confers upon them so many things."* ***"Think not that Allah doth not heed the deeds of those who do wrong. He but giveth them respite against a Day when the eyes will fixedly stare in horror."*** (Ibraaheem: 42)

Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of `Ubadah Ibn As-Saamit that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *" If anyone testifies that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone, Who has no partners, and that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, is His slave and His Messenger, and that 'Eesa (Jesus), peace be upon him, is Allah's slave and His Messenger and His Word ("Be," and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a Rooh (spirit) created by Him, and that Paradise, is the truth and Hell is the truth, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few. "*

After Allah, Exalted be He, has mentioned the story of Jesus, peace be upon him, in *Surah*, "Ali 'Imraan", He says, ***"This is what we rehearse unto thee of the Signs and the Message of Wisdom. The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; he created him from dust, then said to him: "Be": and he was. The Truth (comes) from thy Lord alone;***

so be not of those who doubt. If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, say: "Come! Let us gather together - our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie! This is the true account; there is no god except Allah; and Allah - He is indeed the Exalted in power, the Wise. But if they turn back, Allah has full knowledge of those who do mischief." (Ali `Imraan: 58-63)

That is why the Najraan delegation came to meet our Prophet, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and they were sixty in number, with fourteen of them in charge of all the rest, while the entire group had three chiefs, who were the noblest and the most highborn among them. They were, Al- `Aaqib, As-Sayyid and Abu Haarithah Ibn 'Alqamah. The three of them kept deliberating on Jesus. Therefore, Allah revealed *Surah*, "Ali Imraan" which tackled this issue. Allah explained how Jesus was created and how his mother had been created earlier. Allah also commanded his Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to invoke the curse of Allah on them if they did not obey him and embrace Islam.

They reverted to reconciliation and truce. One of the delegation, Al-`Aaqib `Abdel Maseeh, addressed the rest saying, "Christian brothers, you have come to know that Muhammad is a Prophet sent by Allah and that he has told you the truth about your Prophet, Jesus. You are also aware of the fact that whenever people curse a Prophet, their elite start to decline and their promising blossoms are eradicated. To curse the Prophet then is to bring demolition upon yourselves. So if you insist on maintaining your religion and persisting in your claims about your Prophet, make peace with the man and go back home. So they asked so of Allah's Messenger, peace and

blessings be upon him, asked him to name the *Jizya*[2] he was to levy on them, and to send with them a trustworthy man. So he sent Abu Ubaidah Al-Garraah, a story which was narrated in detail in the biography of the Prophet.

Allah, Exalted Be He, Is Far and Above Having a Child:

Allah the Almighty says, " ***They say: (Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son! Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous!*** " i.e. a colossal sin, "***As if the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin. That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant. He does take an account of them (all), and hath numbered them (all) exactly. And every one of them will come to Him singly on the Day of Judgement.***" (Maryam: 88-95)

Allah, Exalted be He, explains that He can have no child as He is the Creator and Owner of everything and all are in need of Him. All creatures in heaven and on earth are His bondmen. He is their sole god.

Allah the Almighty says, " ***Yet they make the Jinns equals with Allah, though Allah did create the Jinns; and they falsely, having no knowledge, attribute to him sons and daughters. Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) above what they attribute to Him! To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: how can He have a son when He has no consort? He created all things, and He has full***

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[2] *JJizya* is a poll tax levied from those who do not accept Islam but are willing to live under the protection of the Islamic state.

knowledge of all things. That is Allah, your Lord! There is no god but He, the Creator of all things; then worship ye Him; and He hath power to dispose of all affairs. No vision can grasp Him. But His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted in all things." (Al An`aam: 100-3) Allah thus explains that He is the Creator of everything, He is Unique, and therefore can never have a child.

Allah the Almighty says, ***"Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;"*** i.e. Allah is peerless, ***"Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;"*** i.e. He is the Master Whose Knowledge, Wisdom and Mercy are perfect, ***"He begetteth not,"*** i.e. He has no child, ***"Nor is He begotten;"*** i.e. He was not born, ***"And there is none like unto Him."*** meaning He has no equal, thus Allah can never have a child. (Al Ikhlaas)

Allah the Almighty says, ***"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son, Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not ' Trinity': desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is One God: glory be to Him: (far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongeth all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs. Christ disdains not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah): those who disdain his worship and are arrogant - he will gather them all together unto Himself to (answer). But to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards - and more, out of His bounty: but those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous penalty; nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them. "***(Al Nisaa': 171-3)

Allah forbids the People of the Book to go to extremes in religion. Christians' praise of Jesus is exaggerated. They should have adhered only to the fact that he is Allah's bondman and messenger and the son of the Virgin who kept her chastity and to whom Allah sent Gabriel who breathed into her of Allah's spirit, upon Allah's command, causing her to conceive. Mary was actually in contact with the Divine Spirit through Gabriel. However, she is one of Allah's creatures and Jesus' name was habitually attached to hers as he had no father. Allah the Almighty says, ***" The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: ' Be ': and he was."*** (Ali `Imraan: 59) Likewise, Allah says, ***"They say, 'Allah hath begotten a son': Glory be to Him - Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: everything renders worship to Him. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth when He decreeth a matter, He says to it: ' Be, ' and it is."*** (Al Baqarah: 116-7)

Allah the Almighty says, ***"The Jews call `Uzair (Ezra) a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!"*** (Al Tawbah: 30) Allah states that the Jews and the Christians having both falsely claimed that Allah has a child, far and above be He from all that. Allah explains that their allegations are baseless.

Similarly, many sects of the Arabs claimed out of ignorance that the angels are the daughters of Allah and that He married into the Jinns and begot angels for daughters. Far be He from these false claims. Allah the Almighty says, ***"And they make into females angels who themselves serve Allah. Did they witness their creation? Their evidence will be re-***

corded, and they will be called to account!" (Al Zukhruf: 19)

Allah the Almighty says, *"Now ask them their opinion: is it that thy Lord has (only) daughters, and they have sons? - Or that We created the angels female, and they are witnesses upon (thereto)? Is it not that may say, from their own invention, ' Allah has begotten children '? But they are liars! Did He (then) choose daughters rather than sons? What is the matter with you? How judge ye? Will ye not then receive admonition? Or have ye an authority manifest? Then bring ye your Book (of authority) if ye be Truthful! And they have invented a blood relationship between Him and the Jinns: but the Jinns know (quite well) that they have indeed to appear (before His Judgment Seat)! Glory to Allah! (He is free) from the things they ascribe (to Him)! Not (so do) the Servants of Allah, sincere and devoted. "* (Al Saaffaat: 149-60)

Allah, Exalted be He, says in another *Surah*, *"And they say: ' (Allah) Most Gracious has begotten offspring. ' Glory to Him! They are (but) servants raised to honor. They speak not before He speaks, and they act (in all things) by His command. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His (glory). If any of them should say, ' I am a god besides Him' such a one We should reward with Hell: thus do We reward those who do wrong. "* (Al Anbiyaa': 26-9)

Allah, Exalted be He, says in the opening of *Surah*, "Al Kahf", *"Praise be to Allah, Who hath sent to His Bondman the Book, and has allowed therein no crookedness: (He hath made it) Straight (and Clear) in order that He may warn (the godless) of a terrible Punishment from Him, and that He may give Glad Tidings to the Believers who work righteous deeds,*

that they shall have a goodly Reward. Wherein they shall remain forever: further, that He may warn those (also) who say, ' Allah has begotten a son': no knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. It is a grievous thing that issues from their mouths as a saying. What they say is nothing but falsehoods!" (Al Kahf: 1-5)

Allah the Almighty also says, *"He it is that hath made you the Night that ye may rest therein, and the Day to make things visible (to you). Verily in this are Signs for those who listen (to His Message). They say, ' Allah has begotten a son!' - Glory be to Him! He is Self-Sufficient! His are all things in the heavens and on earth! No warrant have ye for this! Say ye about Allah what ye know not? Say: ' Those who invent a lie against Allah will never prosper.' A little enjoyment in this world! - and then, to Us will be their return. Then shall We make than taste the severest Penalty for their blasphemies. "* (Yoonus: 67-70)

These verses refute all false claims of the various atheist sects, namely the philosophers, Arab disbelievers, Jews, Christians who put forth baseless allegations, far be Allah from all that those people ascribe to Him.

Since this particular allegation was mainly made by the Christians, they are frequently referred to in the Qur'an in order to refute their allegation, and to highlight their contradiction and ignorance. As for the truth, it never varies. Allah the Almighty says, *"Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy."* A group of stray people, who were in the dark from amongst them claimed that Jesus is God, another group maintained that he is the son of God, whereas a third group yet thought he is the third party of the Trinity.

In *Surah*, "Al Maa'idah", Allah the Almighty says," ***In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary. Say: ' Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His Will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all - everyone that is on the earth? For to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He createth what He pleaseth. For, Allah hath power over all things.*** " (Al Maa'idah: 17) Allah speaks of their atheism and ignorance. He explains that he is the Creator, and the Powerful.

Towards the end of this *Surah*, Allah the Almighty says, ***"They do blaspheme who say: ' Allah is Christ the son of Mary.' But said Christ: 'O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' "*** Allah has declared them atheists. He explains how they behaved so though He had sent them Jesus son of Mary, and though Jesus explained that he was a bondman of Allah and that he was to call on people to worship only Him and to warn those who disobey him that they would be punished in Hell. That is why Allah says, ***"Whoever joins other gods with Allah - Allah will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrongdoers be no one to help.*** " (Al Maa'idah: 72)

Next, Allah the Almighty says, ***"They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God."*** i.e. He has no partner, no match, no wife or child. Then He warns them saying, ***"If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them."*** Next, He calls on them gently and mercifully to repent of such a colossal sin that would incur punishment in Hell. He says, ***"Why turn they not to Allah and seek His forgiveness? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*** " (Al Maa'idah: 73-4)

Next, Allah speaks in detail about Jesus and his mother explaining that he is a Messenger and that his mother is worthy of praise. He says, ***"Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what way they are deluded away from the truth!"*** (Al Maa'idah: 75) How can Jesus then be a god?

At the end of this *Surah*, Allah the Almighty says, ***"And behold! Allah will say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?' He will say:' Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'; and I was a witness over them whilest I dwelt amongst them; when Thou didst take me up Thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things. If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy*** **servants**: ***if Thou dost forgive them, thou art the Exalted in power, The Wise. "*** (Al Ma'idah: 116-8)

Allah says that on the Day of Judgment, He will ask Jesus in order to honor him and to reprimand those who ascribe false claims to him, namely that he is God, the son of God or His partner, far be He from all this. In turn, Jesus will answer Allah saying that He is far above having a partner and will show extreme politeness in addressing Allah. He will explain that it was Allah Who sent him and revealed the Holy Scripture unto him, will admit that Allah is his Creator and Provider of

sustenance and will explain that Allah raised him unto Him when the Jews wanted to kill and crucify him, explaining how Allah saved him by rendering one of his disciples a lookalike of Jesus on whom they took their revenge. Next Jesus, by way of disowning the Christians, will tell Allah that if He wishes to torture them, they deserve it and if He wishes to forgive them, that will be entirely up to Him.

Imam Ahmad quotes Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, as stating that Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him , kept contemplating this particular verse all night long till the break of dawn, ***" If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants: if Thou dost forgive them, thou art the Exalted in power, The Wise."*** (Al Maa'idah: 118) He said, *" I asked Allah, Exalted be He, for intercession for my people and I was granted it, and it will be granted to whoever worships Allah solely with no partners."*

Then Allah the Almighty says, ***" Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son, he could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He doth create: but Glory be to Him! (He is above such things.) He is Allah, The One, the Irresistible. He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions): He makes the Night overlap the Day, and the Day overlap the Night: He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law): each one follows a course for a time appointed. Is not He the Exalted in Power - He Who forgives again and again?"*** (Al Zumar: 4-5) Allah the Almighty says, ***"Glory to the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne (of Authority)! (He is free) from the things they attribute (to Him)!"*** (Al Zukhruf: 82) He also says, ***"Say: 'Praise be to Allah, Who begets no son, and has no partner in (His) dominion: nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation: yea, magnify Him for His greatness and glory!"*** (Al Israa': 111)

Where Was Jesus Born?

Ibn Katheer states: As I have mentioned before, Jesus, peace be upon him, was born at Bethlehem, a town near Jerusalem." Ibn `Abbaas narrates: After Jesus had spoken in the cradle, he stopped speaking until he reached the natural age of speaking. Then Allah granted him wisdom and eloquence. However, the Jews, spoke a tremendous calumny against him and his mother. They used to call him "the son of the prostitute". In this respect, Allah the Almighty says, ***"That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge."*** (Al Nisaa': 156)

When he was seven, his mother sent him to Al-Kuttaab[3]. Whenever the teacher tried to teach him a new thing, he found out that Jesus was aware of it. Upon noticing this, the teacher made him memorize Abu Jaad. But Jesus asked him, "What does Abu Jaad mean?" "I do not know", the teacher replied. Thereupon Jesus retorted, "How do you teach me something which you do not know?" The teacher next requested that Jesus teach him. Jesus sat in his teacher's place and said to him, "You can ask me". The teacher questioned him about the meaning of Abu Jaad. To the teacher's total amazement, Jesus replied, "The letter "A" refers to the bounties of Allah; "B" to the magnificence of Allah; and J to the beauty of Allah and His Pleasure."

It was a gift from Allah that Jesus showed miracles while he was young. When they heard about this, the Jews began to contrive conspiracies against him. As a result, his mother feared for his safety. Therefore, Allah inspired to her to escape with Jesus to a safe place. In this respect, Allah says, ***"And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a sign: We gave them***

[3] Lowest elementary school for teaching religious knowledge. (trans.)

both shelter on high ground affording rest and security and furnished with springs." (Al Mu'minoon: 50)

Ibn Katheer states: "There is a difference of opinion among exegetes of the Qur'an as to the place of that high ground. The most correct opinion is that of Ibn `Abbaas. He states that the high ground refers to that river, concerning which Allah the Almighty says, ***"but (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree):" Grieve not! "For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee"*** (Maryam: 24) i.e., the place where Jesus was born was near Jerusalem.

When Were the Four Divine Scriptures Revealed?

Abu Zar'ah Ad-Dimashqi states: The Torah was revealed to Moses on the sixth night of Ramadaan; the Psalms was revealed to David on the twelfth night of Ramadaan, i.e., 482 years after the revelation of the Torah; the Gospel was revealed to Jesus, son of Mary, on the eighteenth night of Ramadaan, i.e., 1500 years after the revelation of the Psalms; and the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad, peace be upon him, on the twenty-fourth night of Ramadaan. In his book of history, Ibn Jareer mentions that the Gospel was sent down to Jesus, peace be upon him, while he was thirty, and that he lived among his people until he was raised to heaven at the age of thirty-three.

Jesus Was Aided by Clear Signs:

Is-haaq Ibn Bishr states: When Jesus, son of Mary, peace be upon him, was sent as a Prophet for the Israelites and was supported by clear proofs, the Hypocrites and disbelievers among them started mocking and laughing at him. They used to ask, "What did so-and-so eat yesterday? What did he store in his house?" As soon as he answered them, the believers' faith

grew and increased whereas the hypocrites and disbelievers sank deeper in arrogance and disbelief.

Jesus had no house to seek refuge in. However, he used to wander and roam about from one place to another. The first time Jesus raised the dead was when he saw a woman sitting by a grave and weeping over her dead daughter. Upon seeing her, Jesus asked her, "What is the matter with you?" The woman replied, "My only daughter had died, and I vowed not to leave this place until I die or she is raised up again so that I can see her?" Jesus, then, said, "Will you return home, if you see her?" "Yes," answered the woman. Jesus went and performed two *Rak'ahs* (prayer units). He then sat beside the grave and cried, "O-calling the girl's name-! Get up by the will of Allah, the All-Merciful! "Thereupon the grave shook. Jesus cried for the second time and, by Allah's will, the grave cracked. Upon crying for the third time, the dead daughter came out of the grave shaking off the dust. Jesus, then, asked her, "What delayed you?" She replied, "At the first cry, Allah sent an angel to gather my organs; at the second, my life was brought back; and at the third, I thought it was the Cry of Resurrection. As a result, my hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes turned gray out of fear of the Day of Judgement." The daughter turned to her mother and said, "O mother! Why did you cause me to experience the agony of death twice? O mother! Be patient and seek Allah's reward, as I have no desire to live longer." The daughter then said to Jesus, "O Allah's spirit and word! Ask Allah to take my life again and to relieve me of the agony of death." So Jesus prayed to his Lord and she was sent back to the grave. Upon learning of this, the Jews got so angry with him.

Ibn Katheer mentions that the Israelites asked Jesus, peace be upon him, to bring back to life Sam, the son of Noah. He prayed to Allah, Exalted be He, and He raised him up and

then told them about the Ark. Then Jesus invoked Allah to cause him to die again, and it was done.

In *Surah*, "Al Maa'idah", Allah the Almighty and Most Truthful, says, ***"Then will Allah say, "O Jesus, the son of Mary! Recount My favor to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the book and wisdom, the Law, and the Gospel."***

The Holy Spirit referred to in this verse is meant for Gabriel, peace be upon him; wisdom means writing and understanding; the Torah refers to the Divine Scripture revealed to Moses, the son of 'Imran, peace be upon him; and the Gospel stands for the Divine Scripture revealed to Jesus, the son of Mary, peace be upon him. Jesus, peace be upon him, memorized the Torah and the Gospel.

Allah next says, ***" And behold! Thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird by My leave. And thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave."*** That is to say Jesus managed, by Allah's leave, to shape clay into the form of birds and then breathed into it and it became a real bird. The phrase ***"by My leave"*** emphasizes the fact that he used to do those things only by the will and power of Allah.

Allah then says, ***"And thou healest those born blind and lepers by My leave. And behold! Thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. I did restrain the children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the Clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said, 'This is nothing but evident magic.' "*** (Al Maa'idah: 110) Allah restrained the children of Israel from doing harm to Jesus when they decided to crucify him. He raised him unto Himself and delivered him from them in order to protect him against harm and save him from death.

Allah the Almighty says, ***"And behold! I inspired the Disciples to have faith in Me and Mine Messenger: they said, 'We have faith and do thou bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims.' "*** (Al Maa'idah: 111). The inspiration referred to in the verse means that Allah guided them to faith, as He says, in another verse: ***"And thy Lord taught the Bee"*** (Al-Nahl: 68) He also says, ***"So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: "Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river"*** (Al Qasas: 7) Others interpret the word inspiration as referring to that kind of revelation via a Messenger and Allah's guidance to hearts to accept the truth, they say, ***" We have faith and thou bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims"*** (Al Maa'idah: 111).

Among the favors Allah bestowed on His bondman and messenger Jesus, the son of Mary, was that He aided him with supporters and advocates so as to help him call people to solely worship Allah and not to ascribe associates with Him. This is similar to the aid Allah provided for His Messenger, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, concerning which Allah says, ***"He it is that hath strengthened thee with His aid and with (the company of) the Believers; and (moreover) He hath put affection between there hearts: not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection, but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise".*** (Al Anfaal: 62-3)

In *Surah*, "Ali 'Imraan", Allah the Almighty says, ***"And Allah will teach him the book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, and (appoint him) a messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): 'I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave: and I heal those born blind, and the lepers,***

and I quicken the dead by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses.' " That is to say Jesus could tell the people what they had eaten and what they stored for the coming days. ***"Surely therein is a Sign for you"*** i.e., a proof for the truth of my message. ***"If ye did believe; (I have come to you) to attest the Law which was before me and to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you."*** This is an indication that Jesus, peace be upon him, abrogated some of the previous laws stipulated by the Torah. ***"I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So, fear Allah and obey me."*** (Ali 'Imraan: 48-51)

Scholars maintain that every Prophet performed, by Allah's leave, miracles that appealed to his own people. Here are some examples:

- Moses, peace be upon him, was sent at a time when magic was widespread and dominant. So Allah gave him a miracle that overwhelmed every magician. It was when the people made sure that it was but Allah's Supreme Power that they followed Moses and yielded to Allah.

- Likewise, Jesus, peace be upon, was sent at a time when doctors and physicians were most revered, and he performed a miracle that was totally inimitable. How extremely impossible was it for any doctor at the time of Jesus to heal those born blind and the lepers or to raise the dead!

- By the same token, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was sent to eloquent and fluent people. For this reason, Allah revealed to him the Glorious Qur'an which no falsehood can approach from before or behind, as it was sent down by the One Who is All-Wise, Worthy of all praise. Allah has defied the whole mankind and the Jinns to compose the like of the Qur'an or the like of ten *Surah*s or even one *Surah* of it, even if

they are to back up one another with help and support. For it is the word of Allah, the Exalted and Glorified, Who has no comparison in being, attributes or actions.

Allah next says, ***"When Jesus found unbelief on their part, he said, 'Who will be my helper to (the works of) Allah?' "*** (Ali `Imraan: 52). That is to say when the Israelites insisted on disbelief and arrogance, Jesus said, "Who will follow me in the way of Allah?" By ***"helpers"***, Jesus meant the people who would help and support him to call people to the way of Allah, as it was the custom of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, before the Hijra to address the pilgrims in the following manner: who will shelter me so that I can convey the message of my Lord, as Quraish has prevented me from doing so. This was his custom until he migrated to Madinah and Al-Ansaar gave him shelter, defended him, consoled and protected him against anyone who was to do him harm. By the same token, Jesus, the son of Mary, chose a company of the Israelites who believed in his message, helped and defended him, as well as followed the light which was sent down to him. In this respect, Allah says, ***"Said, the Disciples, 'We are Allah's helpers: We believe in Allah, and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims. Our Lord! We believe in what Thou hast revealed and we follow the Messenger; then write us down among those who bear witness."*** Ibn `Abbaas states: This is a reference to the nation of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Ibn Katheer states: Disciples means supporters, as it is confirmed in the two *Saheehs* that when the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, wanted to delegate a person in the Battle of Al-Ahzaab (the confederates the trench), he delegated Az-Zubair Ibn Al-'Awaam. Then he wanted to delegate a person and he again delegated Az-Zubair, may Allah be pleased with him. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, then commented: *"Every Prophet had a*

disciple, and Az-Zubair is my disciple."

Allah the Almighty next says, ***"And (the unbelievers) plotted and planed and Allah too planed, and the best of planners is Allah."*** (Ali `Imraan: 54) It was narrated that when Jesus, peace be upon him, showed cogent proofs and crystal clear signs to the Israelites, most of them persisted in disbelief, arrogance, and errancy. They, moreover, plotted against him. They told the disbelieving king of that time that there was a man who led people astray, incited them to rebel against the king, and sowed the seeds of discord even between a father and his son, in addition to other false accusations. To make things worse, they claimed that he was a son of a prostitute, may Allah's curse be upon them. Enraged by their accusations, the king sent out some soldiers to detain and crucify Jesus. As soon as the soldiers surrounded Jesus' house, they thought they were about to arrest him. However, Allah raised him up to Himself and saved him from their plot. Then Allah made one of those who were in his house look exactly like Jesus. Entering Jesus' house in the pitch of darkness, they thought that man was Jesus. They took him, tortured him, and put him to death on the cross. Then they stuck thorns in his head to demean him. This was Allah's plot to save His Messenger and raise him up to Himself leaving them under the illusion that they arrested Jesus. Allah, then, decreed that they would remain arrogant and ruthless forever, and suffer humiliation till the Day of Resurrection.

Allah the Almighty says, ***" And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said, 'O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you confirming the law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.' But when he came to them with Clear Signs, they said, 'this is evident sorcery!' "*** (Al Saff: 6)

The pronoun "he" may either refer to Jesus or to Muhammad, peace be upon both of them. Allah also says, ***"Who doth greater wrong than one who invents falsehood against Allah, even as he is being invited to Islam? And Allah guides not those who do wrong. Their intention is to extinguish Allah' Light (by blowing) with their mouths: but Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the unbelievers may detest (it)"***(Al Saff: 7-8)

Allah then urges the believers to defend Islam and support its Prophet saying, ***" O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah: as said, Jesus, the son of Mary, to the Disciples, 'Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?' Said the Disciples, "We are Allah's helpers!" Then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved."*** (Al Saff: 114) The portion among the Israelites that disbelieved, denied Jesus' Prophethood, and falsely spoke against him and his mother a tremendous calumny were the Jews, may Allah's curse be upon them until the Day of Resurrection. Another group among Jesus' followers glorified him excessively; some called him the son of Allah; some claimed he is Allah; and yet some others claimed that Jesus is one of three gods which are united in the form of one God, i.e., the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Allah next says, ***"But We gave power to those who believed against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed."*** (Al Saff: 14). That is to say Allah strengthened those who believed against their foes, and they became the uppermost.

In another verse, Allah says, ***"Behold! Allah said, "O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those***

who follow thee superior to those who reject faith to the Day of Resurrection" (Ali `Imraan: 55) That is to say those who were close in following Jesus would be made superior to others. As Muslims believe that Jesus is Allah's bondman and messenger -which is the most truthful belief - they were made superior to the Christians who went far in glorifying Jesus and placing him in a rank more than that which Allah bestowed on him. By the same token, the Christians were made superior to the Jews, since they were at least closer to Jesus' message than the Jews were.

Allah says, ***"Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures), in the Law and the Gospel; for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper."*** (Al A`raaf: 157)

Thus Jesus was the last Prophet sent to the Israelites. He gave them glad tidings about the seal of Prophets who would succeed him pointing out his name and attributes so that they might know him and follow his guidance.

The Story of the Table Spread:

Allah Almighty says: ***" Behold! The Disciples said, 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Can thy Lord send down to us a Table set (with viands) from heaven?' Said Jesus, 'Fear Allah, if ye have faith.' They said, 'We only wish to eat there of and satisfy our hearts, and to know that thou hast indeed told us***

the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle.' Said Jesus the son of Mary, 'O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a Table set (with viands), that there may be for us- for the first and the last of us- a solemn festival and a Sign from Thee; and provide for our sustenance, for thou art the Best Sustainer (of our needs).' Allah said, 'I will send it down unto you: but if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples.' " (Al Maa'idah: 112-5)

Ibn Katheer states: Many stories has been narrated by Muslim early Muslims concerning the sending down of a table spread for the disciples of Jesus. It was reported that Jesus, peace be upon him, ordered the disciples to fast for thirty days. Upon completing the period, they requested him to ask his Lord to send down from heaven a table spread for them to eat of. Some of the early Muslims mention that they asked for a table spread because of their poverty and dire need. So they asked Jesus to pray to Allah so that He might send down for them a table spread to eat thereof and have energy and ability to continue their worship of Allah. Jesus, peace be upon him, said, ***"Fear Allah, if ye have faith."*** He feared for them not to be grateful enough for such bliss. However, they insisted that he should ask his Lord for it. ***" They said, 'We only wish to eat thereof' "*** i.e., we are in a dire need of that food, ***" and satisfy our hearts,"*** if we see it coming down from heaven, ***"and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth"*** i.e., our faith in you and your message will grow stronger, ***"and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle"*** i. e., we will bear witness that it is a Sign from Allah and a cogent argument of your Prophethood and that you are telling the truth.

When the disciples insisted to have their wish fulfilled, Jesus, peace be upon him, went to his place of worship, closed

his eyes and burst into tears. He then raised his hands to the sky and humbly prayed to Allah to answer his prayers and send down the table spread for his disciples. In this respect, Allah the Almighty says, ***" Said Jesus the son of Mary," O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a table set (with viands), that there may be for us- for the first and the last of us - a solemn festival."*** As- Soudey states: It means that we will make that day a feast to be glorified by us and those who will succeed us. It may also mean, as some state, that the table will be enough for our first and our last. ***"And a Sign from thee."*** Ibn Katheer explains: i.e., a clear proof of your power and might and of your answer to my prayers, so that they may believe in what I convey about You. ***"And provide for our sustenance, for Thou art the Best Sustainer (of needs)"*** meaning provide for us an easy food without discomfort or hardship. Allah then says, ***"I will send it down unto you: But if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples"*** i.e. in all times.

Allah then sent down a table spread from heaven and people watched it descending between two clouds. It kept on coming closer and closer, and as it was coming very close, Jesus, peace be upon him, prayed to his Lord so that it might be a mercy and not a wrath, a blessing as well as peace from Allah. The table kept on getting closer until it settled between Jesus' hands, peace be upon him, while covered with a napkin. Then Jesus, peace be upon him, uncovered it saying, " In the Name of Allah, the Best Sustainer." Upon uncovering it, people found seven whales, and seven loaves of bread. It was said that there was also some vinegar, pomegranate, and fruits. Jesus, peace be upon him, then ordered the disciples to eat of the table, but they said, " We will not eat until you eat (at first)." Thereupon Jesus said, " But you are the ones who asked for the table spread. Upon refusing to eat first, Jesus ordered the poor,

the needy, and the sick to eat, so they ate, and every one with illness, sickness, or a handicap was cured instantly.

It was said that the table came down once a day, and people ate thereof, the first of them and the last of them, all amounting to about seven thousand persons. Then it used to come every other day, as it was the case with Salih's she-camel; people used to drink its milk day by day. Then Allah the Almighty ordered Jesus to make it exclusively for the poor and the needy and not the rich. This was annoying to lots of people, and hypocrites started talking about it, so it was completely raised up.

Scholars are in disagreement as to whether the table spread was sent down or not. Mujahid and Al- Hasan Al- Basri are reported to have stated that it did not come down, and that when it was said to them, ***" But if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a chastisement such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the people,"*** They said, We have no need for such a thing. Ibn Katheer states: This may find support in the idea that the event of the table spread is unknown to Christians and is not mentioned in their book, although scholars opine that it came down. Ibn Jareer states: Allah the Almighty has said, ***" I will send it down unto you,"*** and the promise of Allah is true. Ibn Katheer states: This opinion (i.e., the opinion of Ibn Jareer) is the most truthful, as it is confirmed by many narrations through the early Muslim. Allah knows best.

The Raising of Jesus, Peace Be Upon Him, to Heaven under Allah's Protection:

Allah the Almighty says, ***"And (the Unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners***

is Allah. Behold! Allah said, 'O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme, I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to Day of Resurrection: then shall ye all return to Me and I will Jude between you of the matter where in ye dispute.' "(Ali `Imraan: 54-5)

Allah the Almighty also says in *Surah*, *"(They have incurred divine displeasure): in that they broke their Covenant; that they rejected the Signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right; that they said, 'Our hearts are the Wrappings.' Nay, Allah hath set the seal on the their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it they believe; that they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge; that they said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah'; but they killed him not, nor crucified him - but it was made to appear to them and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not - Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in power , Wise; and there is none of the people of the Book but must believe in him before his death ; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them."* (Al Nisaa': 155-9)

Ibn Katheer states: Some of the major sins committed by the Jews for which they were cursed and dismissed out of Allah's mercy were: they broke their covenant and promises; they disbelieved in Allah's revelation and guidance as conveyed by His signs and miracles via the Prophets, peace be upon them, they dared to kill many of Allah's messengers unjustly; they said, *"Our hearts are the Wrappings."* Ibn `Abbaas and others explain: It means our hearts are blocked. Ibn Katheer expounds on this saying: It seemed as if they were searching for

an excuse, namely that their hearts could not feel what He was saying. It was also said that they pretended that their hearts were the wrapping of knowledge because they had acquired enough of it. Allah the Almighty says, " ***Nay, Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it believe*** " meaning their hearts got used to disbelief and oppression, ***"that they rejected faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge.*** Ibn `Abbaas and others explain: They accused her of fornication, ***"That they said (in boast) , We killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary."*** Ibn Katheer explains: It means we killed that one who pretended that he was Allah's messenger. This is a form of irony and ridicule of them, just as the disbelievers said, ***"O thou to whom the Message is begin revealed! Truly thou art mad (or possessed)!"*** (Al Hijr: 6)

It was mentioned that when Allah sent Jesus, peace be upon him, with clear signs and evidence, the Jews, may Allah's curse, wrath, and punishment be upon them, envied him for whatever Allah had bestowed on him, namely Prophethood and clear miracles such as curing the blind, healing the leper, and bringing the dead back to life by Allah's permission. They denied his message and tried to harm him in the worst way they could until they forced him not to live amongst them, but to travel around with the company of his mother.

Moreover, they went to the King of Damascus at that time who was a disbeliever and a star worshipper. They told him about a man in Jerusalem who led people astray and perverted the king's subjects. Enraged by their news, the king wrote to his governor in Jerusalem to arrest Jesus, crucify him, and stick thorns on his head to stop him from harming people. The governor carried out the orders of the king, and headed with a group of Jews to the house of Jesus, peace be upon him,

where they found him sitting with a group of his disciples. Their number is said to have been twelve, thirteen, or seventeen, and it was Friday afternoon.

Upon surrounding his house, Jesus felt their presence. As there was no way out, he said to his disciples, "Who amongst you will take my resemblance and be my companion in Paradise?" Thereupon a young man stood up, but Jesus thought he was too young. He repeated his question and the young boy stood up again. Jesus accepted him and Allah made him look exactly like Jesus. Then an opening in the ceiling was made to appear, and Jesus, peace be upon him, fell asleep and was raised up to heaven in such state. In this respect, Allah says, ***"O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee unto Myself!"*** (Ali \`Imraan: 55)

His disciples went out of the house in the still of the night. When the Jews spotted this young man, they thought he was Jesus. They crucified him and stuck thorns in his hand to further humiliate him. People who crucified Jesus, peace be upon him, thought they killed him. Many sects of the Christians accepted their claims out of ignorance and insensibility, with the exception of those who were with Jesus inside the house, as they saw him raised up unto heaven. Allah has explained and clarified the whole story in the Glorious Qur'an which He revealed to his honorable Prophet whom He supported with miracles.

Allah the Almighty says, ***"But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them,"*** i.e. they saw his lookalike and thought it was Jesus. ***"And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow,"*** meaning those of the Jews who claimed to have killed him and those of the Christians who took this claim for granted are all in doubt and confusion. That is

why Allah the Almighty says, ***"For of a surety they killed him not -"*** i.e. they were never certain that they had killed him. They always had their doubts. ***"Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power,"*** meaning He is not to be conquered, and He never lets down whoever seeks His help. ***"Wise" i.e.*** Allah is Wise in all what He commands and decrees. He displays supreme sagacity, makes irrefutable arguments and enjoys great hegemony. (Al Nisaa': 157-8)

It was reported that Ibn `Abbaas said: When Allah desired to raise his Prophet up unto heaven, Jesus walked up to his disciples with his head dripping wet. There were twelve disciples of his in the house. Then, he said, "Some of you will relinquish their faith in me twelve times after they had believed in me. Next he asked, who is willing to act as my lookalike, get killed instead of me and be with me in heaven? The youngest among them got up. Jesus said, sit. He repeated his question and the same young man got up anew, and answered, I am. Jesus said, you are the one. Then he became Jesus' lookalike, and Jesus was raised up from the house unto heaven. The Jews came asking for Jesus, found his lookalike, killed him then crucified him. Some of them lost their faith in him twelve times after they had believed in him. They were divided into three sects: one maintained that God remained among them for as long as He wished and was raised up to heaven. These are the Jacobites. Another sect believed that the son of God remained among them for as long as He wished and God raised him up unto Him. These are the Nestorians. The third stated that Allah's bondman and messenger was among us for as long as He wished and Allah raised him up unto Him. These are the Muslims.

Sa'eed Ibn Al-Musayeb explains: When Jesus, peace be upon him, was crucified, he was thirty-three years of age.

Ibn Katheer states: It was reported that people will be admitted to Paradise beardless, hairless, looking at their best and at the age of thirty-three. According to a different narration, as young as Jesus and as handsome as Joseph. It was mentioned that Ibn `Abbaas said: When Jesus was raised up unto heaven, a cloud approached him till it was close enough for him to sit on. Mary bid him goodbye in tears. Then she watched him being raised up unto heaven. Jesus threw her his garment saying, "This will be our sign till Judgment Day." He threw his hood on Sham`oon. His mother kept waving her hand to him till he totally disappeared. She loved him dearly, as she offered him the love of both parents, because he had no father, and she constantly kept him company.

Allah Almighty says, ***"And there is one of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death."*** (Al Nisaa': 159) Al-Hasan, Qatadah and others explain: This means before the death of Jesus, peace be upon him. Allah has raised him up unto Himself and He will resurrect him before Judgment Day in such a manner that all believers and atheists will believe in him. Ibn Jareer explains: All People of the Book will believe in him before his death (i.e. before the death of Jesus).

Ibn Katheer states: This is the truth as will be illustrated shortly and it will be coupled with evidence. At the end of time and right before the Day of Judgment, Jesus will come down to earth, to kill the Dajjaal (Antichrist), kill the pigs, break the Cross, accept no Jizya from the People of the Book, accept either of the two choices; Islam or war, as was mentioned in a number of other *Hadiths*. Allah the Almighty says, ***"And on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them."*** (Al Nisaa': 159) i.e. he will testify to all their actions which he bore witness to before being raised up to heaven and after his return to earth.

The Descent of Jesus at the End of the World:

Al-Bukhari mentions on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"By Him in Whose hand my soul is, the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you as a just judge. He will break the cross, kill pigs, and abolish the jizya,, and wealth will pour forth to such an extent that no one will accept it, and one Sajdah (prostration in prayer) will be better than the world and what it contains."* Abu Hurairah used to say: You may recite the verse, ***"Not one of the people of the book will fail to believe in him before his death and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them."*** (Al Nisaa': 159).

Ahmad reports on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, *"Jesus, the of Mary, will certainly pronounce Talbiyah for Hajj (Pilgrimage) or for 'Umra (Minor pilgrimage) or for both in the valley of Rauhaa'."* Ahmad also reports on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The Prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one. I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary, as there has been no Prophet between us. He will descend to the earth, and if you see the following signs, know that he is Jesus: He is a ruddy man inclined to white; he will be dressed in red-colored clothes, his hair will be wet though water would not have touched it; he will break the cross, kill the pigs; abolish the Jizya; and call people to embrace Islam. In that time Allah will cause all religions to disappear except Islam; He will also kill the Dajjaal. Then the earth will become safe so that lions may graze with camels; tigers with cows, wolves with sheep; and so that children may*

play with snakes without being harmed. He will remain forty years, after which he will die and be prayed for by Muslims.

Moslem states on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The Last Hour would not come until the Romans would land at Al-'Amaaq or in Daabiq. An army consisting of the best (soldiers) of the people of the earth at that time will come from Medina (Madinah) (to counteract them). When they will arrange themselves in ranks, the Romans would say, " Do not stand between us and those (Muslims) who took prisoners from amongst us. Let us fight with them; and the Muslims would say, " Nay, by Allah, we would never get aside from you and from our brethren that you may fight them. They will then fight and a third (part) of the army would run away, whom Allah will never forgive. A third (part of the army), which would be constituted of excellent martyrs in Allah's sight, would be killed and the third who would never put to trial would win and they would be conquerors of Constantinople. And as they would be busy in distributing the spoils of war (amongst themselves) after hanging their swords by the olive trees, the Satan would cry: The Dajjal has taken your place among your family. They would then come out, but it would be of no avail. And when they would come to Syria, he would come out while they would be still preparing themselves for battle drawing up the ranks. Certainly, the time of prayer shall come and then Jesus, peace be upon him, the son of Mary would descend and would lead them in prayer. When the enemy of Allah would see him, it would (disappear) just as the salt dissolves itself in water and if he (Jesus) were not to confront them at all, even then it would dissolve completely, but Allah would kill them by his hand and he would show them their blood on his lance (the lance of Jesus Christ)."*

Landmark scholar Moslem reports on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The last hour would not came unless the Muslims fought against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a store or a tree and a stone or a tree would say, 'Muslim, or bondman of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.' But the tree Gharqad would not say, for it is the tree of the Jews."*

Moslem also reported on the authority of An-Nawwaas Ibn Sam`aan who said, *"The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, made mention of the Dajjal one day in the morning. He sometimes described him to be insignificant and sometimes described (his turmoil) as very significant (and we felt) as if he were in the cluster of the date-palm trees. When we went to him (to the Holy Prophet) in the evening and he detected (the signs of fear) in our faces, he said, "What is the matter with you?" We said, " Allah's Messenger! You have made a mention of the Dajjal in the morning (sometimes describing him) to be insignificant and sometimes very important, until we began to think that might be present in some (near) part of the cluster of the date-palm trees. Thereupon he said, I harbor fear in regard to you in so many other things besides the Dajjal. If he comes forth while I am among you, I shall contend with him on your behalf, but if he comes forth while I am not amongst you, a man must contend on his own behalf and Allah would take care of very Muslim on my behalf (and safeguard) him against his evil. He (Dajjal) would be a young man with twisted, curly hair, and a one blind eye. I compare him to 'Abd-ul-Uzza Ibn Qataan. He who amongst you would survive to see him should recite before him the opening verses of Surah Al- Kahf. He would appear on the way between Syria and Iraq and would spread mischief right and left. "O bondman of Allah! I adhere (to the path of Truth)".*

We said, " Allah's Messenger! How long would he stay on earth? He said, "For forty days; one day is like a year and one day is like a month and one day like a week and the rest of the days would be like your days, We said, " Allah's Messenger! Would one day's prayer suffice for the prayers of a day equal to one year? Thereupon he said; "No, but you must make an estimate of time (and then observe prayer)". We said: "Allah's Messenger, how fast would he walk upon the earth?" Thereupon he said: He would go fast as if he is driven by the wind. He would come to the people and invite them (to a wrong religion) and they would affirm their belief in him and respond to him. He would then give command to the sky and there would be rainfall upon the earth and it would grow corps. Then in the evening, their pasturing animals would come to them with high humps and full udders.

He would then come to another people and invite them. But they would reject him and he would go away from them and there would suffer drought and nothing would be left for them. He would then walk through the west, and say to it: Bring forth your treasures, and the treasures would come out and collect (themselves) before him like a swarm of bees. He would then call a person brimming with youth and strike him with the sword and cut him into two pieces and (make these pieces lie at a distance which is generally) between the archer and his target. He would then call (that young man) and he will come forward laughing with his face gleaming (with happiness) and it would be at this very time that Allah would send the Christ, son of Mary, and he will descend at the white minaret in the eastern side of Damascus wearing two garments lightly dyed with saffron and placing his hands on the wings of two angels. When he would lower his head, there would fall beads of perspiration from his head, and when he would raise it up, beads like pearls would scatter form it. Every non-believer who would smell the

odor of his self would die and his breath would reach as far as he would be able to see. He would then search for him (Dajjal) until he would catch hold of him at the gate of Ludd and would kill him. Then the people whom Allah had protected would come to Jesus, son of Mary, and he would wipe their faces and would inform them of these words: I have brought forth from amongst My bondmen such people against whom none would be able to fight; you take people safely to Tur, and then Allah would send Gog and Magog and they would swarm down from every slope. The first of them would pass the lake of Tiberias and drink out of it. And when the last of them would pass, he would say: There was once water there. Jesus and his companions would then be besieged here (at Tur, and they would be so much hard pressed) that the head of the ox would be dearer to them then one hundred dinars. Then Allah's Apostle, Jesus, and his companions would supplicate Allah who would send to them insects (which would attack their necks) and in the morning they would perish like one single person. Allah's Apostle, Jesus, and his companions would then come down to the earth and they would not find on the earth as much space as a single span which is not filled with their putrefaction and stench. Allah's Apostle, Jesus, and his companions would then again beseech Allah. Who would send birds whose necks would be like those of bactrin camels and they would carry them and throw them where Allah would will. Then Allah would send rain which no house of clay or (the tent of) camels' hairs would keep out and it would wash away the earth until it could appear to be a mirror. Then the earth would be told to bring forth its fruit and restore its blessing and, as a result thereof, there would grow (such a big) pomegranate that a group of persons would be able to eat, and seek shelter under its skin. A milch cow would give so much milk that a whole party would be able to drink it. The milch camel would give such (a large quantity of) milk that the whole tribe would be able to drink out of that and the milch

sheep would give so much milk that the whole family would be able to drink out of that. At that time Allah would send a pleasant wind which would soothe (people) even under armpits and would take the life of every Muslim and only the wicked would survive who would commit adultery like asses and the Last Hour would come to them."

Imam Moslem narrated that a person came to `Abdulallaah Ibn `Amr Ibn Al-`Aas and said, "What is this *Hadith* that you narrated that the Last Hour would come at such and such time? Thereupon he said, "Glory be to Allah! There is no god but Allah. I decided that I would not narrate anything to anyone anymore. I only said that after some time you would witness an important event; the Sacred Mosque (Ka`bah), and so on...

He then reported that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The Dajjal would appear in my Ummah (nation) and he would stay (on earth) for forty - I can not say whether he meant forty days , forty months or forty years. And Allah would then send Jesus son of Mary who would resemble ' Urwa Ibn Mas`ood. He (Jesus the Christ) would chase him and kill him. Then people would live for seven years that there would be no rancor between two persons. Then Allah would send cold wind from the side of Syria that none would survive upon the earth having a speck of good in him or faith in him but he would die, so much so that even if some amongst you were to enter the innermost part of the mountain, this wind would reach him even in that place and would cause his death. I heard Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying, "Only the wicked people would survive and they would be as careless birds with the characteristics of beasts. They never appreciate the good nor condemn evil. Then Satan would come to them in human form and would say, 'Don't you respond?' And they would say, 'What do you want us to do?' He would command*

them then to worship the idols. Then the trumpet would be heard so loud that no one would hear it but he would bend his neck to one side and raise it from the other side. The first one to hear it would swoon and the other people would also swoon, then Allah would send or He would cause to send rain which would be like dew. The rain would cause the bodies of the people to grow. Then trumpets would be blown and they would stand up and begin to look (around). Afterwards it would be said, "O people, go to your Lord, **"Make them stand there. And they would be questioned."** (Al Saaffaat: 24) *Then it would be said, "Bring out a group (out of them) for the Hell - Fire. Then it would be asked, "How much?" It would be said, "Nine hundred and ninty- nine out of every thousand for the Hell-Fire and that would be the day which would make the children get old because of its terror and that would be the day about which it has been said: "On the day when the shank would be uncovered".*

Moslem reports on the authority of Hudhaifah Ibn Usaid Al-Ghifaari who said, *"The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, came to us all from 'Arafa as we were discussing the Last Hour. Thereupon he said, " It will not come until you see ten signs first: the raising of the sun from the west, the smoke, the beast, the people of Gog and Magog, the descent of Jesus, son of Mary, the Dajjal, and land—sliding in three places, one in the east, the other in the west, and the third in Arabia at the end of which fire would burn forth from Yemen, and would drive people to the place of their assembly."*

Ibn Katheer states: All these *Hadiths* are sound and authentic. They indicate that Jesus, peace be upon him, will descend to the earth, namely in Damascus at the eastern minaret on the time of dawn prayer. Ibn Katheer goes on to say that on the year 741AH a white minaret has been built on the Umayyad Mosque instead of that one which the Christians destroyed, and

it is most likely that it is this minaret at which Jesus, peace be upon him, will descend. Upon his descent, Jesus will kill the pigs, break the Cross and abolish the Jizya, and will not accept any religion except Islam. Moreover, he will come out from the valley of Rauhaa' to pronounce Talbiya for Hajj or Umra or for both of them. He will remain for forty years after which he will die and be buried with Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his two companions (Abu Bakr and `Umar).

Jesus: His Attributes and Virtues:

Allah says, ***"Christ the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger, many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth."*** (Al Maa'idah: 75)

Al-Bukhari and Moslem state in their two *Saheehs* that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"If anyone bears witness that there is no god but Allah who has no associate, and that Muhammad is His bondman and Messenger, and that Jesus is Allah's bondman and Messenger, and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a soul from Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he has done even if those deeds were few."*

Al-Bukhari and Moslem also mention on the authority of Abu Mousa Al-Ash'ari that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him , said *"If a person teaches his slave girl good manners properly, educates her properly, and then manumits and marries her, he will get a double reward. And if a man believes in Jesus and then believes in me, he will get a double reward. And if a slave fears his Lord (i.e. Allah) and obeys his masters, he will too get a double reward."*

Moreover, Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Ibn

`Abbaas that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"You will be resurrected (and assembled) barefoot, stark naked, and uncircumcised." The Prophet then recited Allah's saying,* ***"As We began the fist creation, We shall repeat it: A promise We have under taken. Truly We shall do it."*** *He added," The first to be dressed will be Abraham- then some of my companions will be taken to the right and to the left. I will say, "My companions! and it will be said," They had been converted since you left them," I will then say What the pious bondman Jesus, the son of Mary, said,* ***"And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, when Thou didst take me up, Thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things. If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants, and if Thou dost forgive them, Thou art the Exalted in power, the Al-Wise."*** (Al Maa'idah: 117-8)

Furthermore, Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that the latter said, "I heard Umar (i.e. Ibn Al-Khattaab), while addressing the people from the pulpit, saying, " I heard the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, say, *"Do not glorify me the same way the Christians glorified Jesus, the son of Mary, for I am but a bondman. So, call me Allah's bondman and Messenger."*

In addition to that, Al-Bukhari states on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"None spoke in the cradle but three (The first was), Jesus, (the second was) a man from the children of Israel called Juraij. While he was offering his prayers, his mother came and called him. He said (to himself), 'Shall I answer her or keep on praying?' (He went on praying and did not answer her). His mother said, 'O Allah! Do not let him die till he sees the faces of the prostitutes.' So, while he was in his hermitage, a lady came and sought to seduce him, but he turned her down.*

Therefore, she went to a shepherd and seduced him instead. As a result she gave birth to a child and claimed that it belonged to Juraij. Upon hearing her accusations, the people tore down his hermitage, drove him out and attacked him. Juraij performed the ablution and offered a prayer. Then he asked the child, 'O child! Who is your father?' The child answered, 'The shepherd.' After hearing this, the people said, 'We shall rebuild your hermitage of gold,' but he said, 'No, of nothing but mud,' (The third one to speak while still in the cradle was the hero of the following story). A lady from the children of Israel was nursing her child while a handsome rider passed by, She said, 'O Allah! Make my child like him.' On that the child left her breast, faced the rider and said, 'O Allah! Do not make me like him,' The child then started suckling her breast again, Abu Huraiah said, 'As if I were looking at the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him sucking his finger (in way of demonstration.)' After a while a lady slave passed by them and she (i.e. the child's mother) said, 'O Allah! Do not make my child like this (slave girl).' On that the child left her breast and said, 'O Allah! Make me like her.' When she asked why, the child replied, 'The rider is one of the tyrants while this slave girl is falsely accused of theft and fornication.' "

Al-Bukhari also reports on the authority of Salmaan that the period which was between the times of Jesus and Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was six hundred years.

THE STORY OF MUHAMMAD, PEACE AND BLESSINGS BE UPON HIM

His Name:

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, as the majority of biographers state, is the son of `Abdullaah, son of `Abdul-Muttalib, son of Haashim, son of `Abdu Manaaf, son of Qusayy, son of Kilaab, son of Murrah, son of An-Nadr, son of Kinaanah, son of Uzaymah, son of Mudrikah, son of Elyas, son of Mudar, son of Nizaar, son of Ma`dd, son of `Adnaan. His mother, Aaminah, was the daughter of Wahb. His father died while his mother was still pregnant. His grandfather then took charge of him.

His Birth and Nursing:

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was born in Makkah. The exact date of his birth is disputed[1], but it is most likely to be on Monday, 9th Rabee` Al-Awwal (20th or 22nd of April, 571 AC), the same year in which the invasion of the Elephants took place against the Ka`bah.

After the Prophet's birth, his mother sent for his grandfather `Abdul-Muttalib to tell him that she had given birth to a boy and asked him to come and see him. Ibn Is-haaq narrates: Abdul-Muttalib took the baby and entered the Ka`bah, where he stood and prayed to Allah showing gratitude to Him

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[1] This uncertainty concerning birthdates is quite common in Arabia, ***"the country of the illiterate people,"*** as the Qur'an called it. Even nowadays, it is so difficult to date the birth of famous men; for example, it is hard to establish the exact birthdate of well-known king `Abdul `Azeez bin Su`ood, the conqueror and unifier of Arabia, a man who ruled for more than fifty years, and whose personality, conduct and biography are known in great detail.

gift. He then named him Muhammad, a rather uncommon name among the Arabs, and circumcised him on the seventh day of his birth, according to the traditions of Quraish at that time. He then tried to find a wet nurse for him.

A Bedouin woman called Haleemah bint Abu Dhu'ayyib was asked to nurse Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. He was thus brought up in a typical Bedouin environment and spoke pure Arabic His foster-brother was `Abdullaah Ibn Al-Haarith; Unaysah and Hudhaafah (or Judhaamah) were his foster-sisters. The Prophet's foster-father was Al-Harith Ibn `Abdul-`Uzzah.

Ibn Is-haaq quotes Haleemah as narrating the following: I departed from my country along with my husband and little son whom I was nursing, in the company of the women of my tribe, in search of other babies to nurse. That was a year of drought when we had nothing left. I was riding a dusky she-donkey of mine with an old she-camel that could not yield a drop of milk. Our hungry child kept us awake all night with his weeping. I hardly had not milk in my breast to feed him, nor could our she-camel provide his morning bowl, but we were hoping for rain and relief. I rode my donkey that was far behind the other riders on account of its weakness and emaciation so that it was a nuisance to them. When we reached Makkah, we looked out for nurslings, and the Prophet of Allah was offered to everyone of us, yet each woman refused him when she was told he was an orphan, as we were hoping for some favor from the baby's father. "An orphan!" We exclaimed, "What will his mother and grandfather do for us?" And so we spurned him because of that. Every woman who came with me got a baby to suckle except me, and when we decided to depart, I said to my husband, "By Allah, I do not like to return in the company of my friends without having taken a babe to suckle; I will go and

take that orphan." "Do as you like," he replied, "perhaps Allah will bless us on his account." So I went back and took him for no reason save that I could find none but him. No sooner had I held him in my arms than my breasts overflowed with milk for him. He drank his fill, as did his foster- brother. Then both of them had a good deep sleep, whereas we could not sleep before because of his incessant wailing. My husband got up and went to the old she-camel, and to his total amazement, her udders were full. He milked her and we drank of her milk to our heart's content, and we spent a happy night. In the morning, my husband said to me, "By Allah, Haleemah, you have taken a blessed creature!" "By Allah, I hope so," I said. Then we went out. As I was riding my she-donkey and carrying him with me, she outstripped the other donkeys and they could not keep pace with her to the point that my companions said to me, "Confound you! Stop and wait for us. Is not this donkey of yours the same one you did come on?" "Certainly it is," I replied. They said, "By Allah, something extraordinary had happened." Then we came to our dwellings in the Banu Sa`d country and I know of no place on Allah's earth more barren than that then was. But after we had brought him (the Prophet) to live with us, my flock used to yield milk in abundance. We milked them and drank while other people had not a drop, nor could they find any in their animals ' udders so that our neighbors would say to their shepherds, "Out upon you! Send your flock to graze where the daughter of Abu Dhu'ayyib's shepherd goes." Even so, their flocks would came home hungry, yielding no milk, while mine would come back with milk in plenty. We realized that that bounty came from Allah for a period of two years, when I weaned him. He was growing up well and none of the other babies could match him. By the time he was two, he was a well-built child. We brought him to his mother, though we were most eager to keep him with us because of the blessing he brought us. So I said to her, "May

you leave my little boy with me until he becomes stronger, for I worry about him from the pest in Makkah." We importuned her until she gave him once more into our keeping.

Purifying the Prophet's Heart:

Few months later, the Prophet was with his foster-brother shepherding the lambs behind the tents when his brother came running to Haleemah and said, "Two men clothed in white have seized the Quraishite brother of mine, laid him down, opened up his breast, and are stirring it up." So they ran towards him and found him on his feet with his face so livid. They then drew him closer and asked him what the matter was. He said, "Two men in white raiment came to me, laid me down, tore open my breast and searched therein for I know not what."

Describing the event, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "*There came to me Gabriel while I was playing with my foster-brothers, and seized me and opened up my breast, extracted my heart and split it; then he extracted a black clot from it and cast it away saying, 'This is the share of Satan in you.' Then he washed my heart in a gold basin full of water from Zamzam until he had cleaned it. Then he returned it to its place.*"

Concerning this incident, Allah says: ***"Have we not expanded thee thy breast? And removed from thee the burden that which gall thy back? And raised high the esteem (in which) thou (art held)?"*** (Al Sharh: 1-4)

Out of fear on his account, Haleemah took the Prophet back to his mother and he lived with her until he became six years of age. Upon her return from a visit with the Prophet to

her husband's grave, she died in Abwa` between Makkah and Madeenah (Medina). Thus the Prophet was left to his grandfather. Ibn Hisham narrates: His grandfather made him a bed in the shade of Ka`bah. His sons used to sit round the bed until he came out to it, but none of them sat upon it out of respect for him. The Prophet, still a little boy, used to come and sit on it and his uncles would drive him away. When `Abdul-Muttalib saw this, he said, "Let my son alone, for by Allah a great future is in store for him." There he would have him sit beside him on his bed and would stroke his back with his hand. It used to please him to see what he did.

The Death of `Abdul-Muttalib:

When the Prophet was eight, his grandfather died. Upon his demise, the Prophet's guardianship was passed to his Uncle Abu Taalib whose love for and protection of Muhammad continued long after the Prophet proclaimed his mission and declared the new faith.

When the Prophet was twelve, he accompanied his uncle on a trade mission to Syria. When the caravan reached Busra in Syria, there was a monk there in his cell by the name of Baheerah, who was well-versed in the knowledge of Christianity. Looking at the Prophet, Baheerah asked Abu Taalib, "Who is this boy?" "He is my son," replied Abu Taalib. "He is not," Baheerah said, "for it could not be that this boy's father is alive." "He is my nephew," Abu Taalib answered correctingly. "Then what of his father?" asked Baheerah. "He died," answered Abu Taalib. "You have told the truth", said Baheerah. "Take your nephew back to his country and guard him carefully against the Jews, for by Allah, if they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him evil; a great future awaits this nephew of yours, so take him home now."

Abu Taalib took the Prophet off quickly and returned to Makkah.

Thus the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, grew up protected by Allah, Who guarded him against the vileness of disbelief because He wished to honor him with Prophethood, until he grew up to be the finest of his people in manliness, the best in character, the most noble in lineage, the best neighbor, the kindest, most truthful, most reliable young man, the furthest removed from filth and corrupt morals, through loftiness and nobility, so that he was renowned among his people as the Trustworthy (As-Sadiq Al-Ameen) because of the good qualities Allah had instilled in him.

The Prophet's Participation in the Sacrilegious War (*Harb Al-Fujjaar*):

When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, turned fifteen, a sacrilegious war broke out between the two tribes of Kinaanah and Qays `Aylaan. It was so called because the two tribes fought in the sacred month. At the beginning of the war, Qays had the upper hand but by midday Kinanah were victorious. It is mentioned that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, took part in that war.

The Prophet's Membership in the Pact of Chivalry (*Hilf Al-Fudool*:

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was a member in the pact called *Hilf Al-Fudool*, which aims at protecting the defenseless and ensure safety for strangers in Makkah. The pact first originated because a stranger from Yemen sold goods in Makkah to an influential member of a powerful local clan who subsequently refused either to pay the

price or to return the goods, whereupon the aggrieved seller stood up in the vicinity of the Ka`bah and implored people to come to his rescue, being a stranger in the city. Several members of Quraish's aristocracy rallied to assist him and secured the return of his goods. Meeting next in the Ka`bah at the house of `Abdullaah Ibn Jud`aan, they pledged henceforth to combat oppressive acts and uphold justice. Muhammad, then only twenty-five years old, was present at this gathering, and was so impressed with the merits of the pledge that when he commenced his mission, he legalized it in Islam. As years went by, even after his mission had become a success, the Prophet continued to express both his high regards for the pact and his willingness to abide by its provisions.

The Prophet Marries Khadeejah:

Ibn Is-haaq narrates: Khadeejah was a merchant woman of dignity and wealth. It had been her custom to hire men to carry merchandise outside the country on a profit-sharing basis, for Quraish were people given to commerce. She heard much good about the truthfulness, trustworthiness and honorable character of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, so, she sent word to him, asking him to go on a trade caravan taking her goods to Syria to trade in them, while she would pay him more than she paid the others. He was to take along a lad of hers called Maysarah. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, accepted the proposal, and the two set off with her goods to Syria.

The Prophet took shelter under the shade of a tree near a monk's cell. The monk came up to Maysarah and asked him, "Who is the man resting beneath the tree?" Maysarah told him that he belonged to the tribe of Quraish, the people who had guardianship of the Sanctuary. Thereupon the monk exclaimed,

"None but a Prophet ever sat under this tree."

Then the Prophet sold the goods he had brought, bought what he wanted to buy and set out on journey back to Makkah. The story goes that at the height of noon when the heat was intense as he rode his beast, Maysarah saw two angels shading the Prophet from the sun. Upon reaching Makkah, they brought Khadeejah her property. She sold it and it amounted to double or thereabouts. Maysarah for his part told her about the two angels who shaded him and of the monk's words.

Now Khadeejah was a determined, noble, and intelligent woman possessing the proper ties with which Allah willed to honor her. So when Maysarah told her of these things, she sent to the Prophet. When he came, she said, "O son of my uncle, I love you for your kinship to me, and for that your are ever in the center; and I love you for your trustworthiness and for your nobility and truthfulness." Then she proposed marriage.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, told his uncles of Khadeejah's proposal, and his uncle Hamzah `Abdul-Muttalib went with him to Khuwaylid, Khadeejah's father, and asked for her hand in marriage and the Prophet married her.

Khadeejah was the mother of all the Prophet's children except Ibraheem, namely Al-Qasim, At-Tahir, At-Tayyib, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah. Abu Al-Qasim, At-Tayyib, and At-Tahir died before Islam. All his daughters lived into Islam, embraced it, and migrated with him to Madeenah.

The Prophet Receives the Qur'an:

`A`ishah narrates: The first aspect of revelation unto

Allah's Prophet was that his dreams always came true. Whatever vision he would have in his sleep would occur exactly as he had seen. Then, he began to enjoy seclusion. He used to retreat alone into the Cave of Hire` where he would spend several days in devotion before going back to his family. He used to take some provisions with him, and when he returned home, he would take a fresh supply for another period. He continued to do so till he received the truth while in the Cave of Hire`. The angel (Gabriel) came to him and said, "Read". He replied, "I am not a reader". The Prophet says, "*He held me and pressed hard till I was exhausted, then he released me and said, "Read", and I replied, "I am not a reader." So, he held me and pressed me hard for the third time. Then he said:* ***"Proclaim (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created - created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy lord is Most Bountiful, - He Who taught (the use of) the Pen, - taught man that which he knew not."*** (Al `Alaq: 1-5). Trembling, the Prophet rushed home to Khadeejah and said, "Wrap me! Wrap me!" They wrapped him and after a while his fear subsided. He turned to Khadeejah and exclaimed, "What has happened to me?!" He then told her of his experience and commented, "I feel for myself". Thereupon, Khadeejah reassured him, "Never fear, everything will be all right. Allah will never let you down; you are kind to your relatives, you are patient and astute, you assist anyone in need, you are hospitable to your guests, and you help in every just cause." Khadeejah then took him to Waraqah Ibn Nawfal, her paternal cousin who was a Christian convert and a scholar well-versed in Arabic, Hebrew, and the Gospel. He lost his eyesight as he had grown very old. Khadeejah said to Waraqah, "Cousin, would you like to hear what your nephew has to say? "Well, nephew," Waraqah said, "what have you seen?" The Prophet narrated to him what he had seen. When he finished, Waraqah said, "It is the same revelation (*Namoos*) as was sent

down to Moses, peace and blessings be upon him. I wish I was a young man so that I might be alive when your people force you out of your city." "Would they force me out?" The Prophet exclaimed. "Yes!" Waraqah answered, "no man has ever come with a revelation like yours but was met with enmity and persecuted." Waraqah continued, " If I live till that day, I will certainly give you all my support." But Waraqah died soon after that and the revelation lingered.

After a short interlude, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, again heard the same voice calling him, "Muhammad, you are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Gabriel." Rushing back to Khadeejah in a state of extreme exhaustion, he asked her to cover him with a cloak. Then he heard the call: ***"O thou wrapped up (in a mantle)! Arise and deliver thy warning! And thy Lord do thou magnify! And thy garments keep free from stain! And all abomination shun! Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself)! But, for thy Lord's (Cause) be patient and constant!"***(Al Muddaththir: 1-7)

Muhammad Assumes his Prophetic Office:

It was then that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, realised what his mission to his people was to be, and that was how it began. He began to respond to Allah's command: he started calling on his people to the worship of Allah solely and the renunciation of idol-worship. In the beginning, he preached his message secretly lest the polytheists in Quraish should hear about him. He started by inviting his nearest kins and intimate friends. He won over few converts: his wife Khadeejah, `Ali Ibn Abi Taalib, Zayd Ibn Haarithah, Abu Bakr As-Sideeq, `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan, Az-Zubair Ibn Al-`Awwaam, `Abdur-Rahmaan Ibn `Awf, Sa`d Ibn Abi Waqqaas etc., may Allah be pleased with them all.

The new converts used to meet the Prophet secretly, and when one of them wanted to perform acts of worship, he/she would go to the glens of Makkah where they could observe them out of the polytheists' sight. When the number of Muslims reached thirty, the Prophet, chose the house of Al-Arqam Ibn Abi Al-Arqam to be a teaching place and place of worship as well. Muslims used to go there from time to time to learn about Islam from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.

The Prophet Preaches Islam Publicly:

Three years passed since the beginning of the revelation, during which people began to embrace Islam in large numbers and the star of Islam started to grow brighter and higher by the day all across Makkah. Then Allah addressed the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, with these words, ***"And admonish thy nearest kinsmen..."*** (Al Shu`araa': 214) Having received Allah's command, the Prophet gathered his relatives and said, "O sons of `Abdul-Muttalib, I know of you Arab who has come to his people with a nobler message than mine. I have brought you the best of this world and the next. Allah has commanded me to call you unto Him. So which of you will help me in this matter, and be my brother, My executor and my successor? " The first one to answer the call was `Ali Ibn Abi Taalib.

Soon after this command, the Prophet was again addressed, ***"Therefore expound openly what thou art commanded, and turn away from those who join false gods with Allah."*** (Al Hijr: 94) For the first time, the Prophet stood on the mountain of As-Safa opposite the Ka`bah and said to the people, "Supposing I now told you that just behind the slopes of this mountain there was an enemy cavalry preparing to attack to you. Would you believe me?" "We know that you never lie,"

they replied. Thereupon, the Prophet said: "I warn you that I have a message from Allah, and I have come to you as a warner of a dreadful punishment. I cannot protect you in this world, nor can I promise you anything in the Hereafter, unless you bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the one and only God." On hearing this statement, Abu Lahab flared up and cursed the Prophet, saying, "Perdition to thee." Then Allah said concerning him, ***"Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he!"***(Al Masad: 1)

Quraish Take Action:

Having realized that the call of Muhammad was directed against their gods and their inveterate practices, Quraish decided to take action. If the idols were destroyed, what would become of them, being the keepers of idols? What would become of their renown throughout the land? Some of their leaders went to Abu Taalib and said, "O Abu Taalib, your nephew has cursed our gods, insulted our religion, mocked our ways of life and accused our fathers of error; either you stop him or you let us get at him." However, he gave them a soft answer and they went away.

The Prophet continued to spread Allah's religion and to call on men to worship Him. When Quraish saw that Abu Taalib had done nothing to stop his nephew or to dissuade him from persisting in what he was doing, they went over to him again and said: "O Abu Taalib, yours is a high and honorable position amongst us, and we have asked you to hold in check your nephew's activities, but you have not done so. By Allah, we cannot tolerate that our fathers should be insulted, our customs scoffed at, and our gods reviled. Either you make him desist or we will fight the pair of you until one side perishes."

Afraid on the Prophet's account, Abu Taalib sent for him and told him, "O my nephew, spare me and yourself. Do not lay on me a burden greater than I can bear." To this the Prophet said: "O my uncle, by Allah, if they were to place the son on my right hand and the moon on my left on the condition that I renounce this Message, until Allah has made it victorious, or I perish instead, I would never renounce it." Then the Prophet, with tears in his eyes, rose to his feet and turned to depart, but his uncle called him back. "Son of my brother," he said, "go and say what you believe; by Allah, I will never, under any circumstances, let you down."

The Persecution of the Prophet and His Followers:

It was then, when the Prophet began to spread his religion and speak against gods, that Quraish became actively hostile, persecuting his followers, mocking and insulting him. The one consideration which prevented them from killing him was fear from the blood-vengeance of the clan to which the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, belonged. However, the Prophet kept proclaiming his message and forsaking their idols, while Quraish did all they could to ridicule his teachings and deject his followers. The Prophet was called a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and a madman.

One day, when the leaders of Quraish were sitting in the Sacred House, the Prophet entered and kissed the Black Stone, and began to perform the seven rounds of *Tawaaf* (circumambulation). They said some insulting things about him, and this was repeated the following day. This time the heads of Quraish leaped up together and encircled the Prophet, saying, "Are you the one who reviled our gods and said so and so about our religion?" "Yes, I am the one who said that," the Prophet replied. Then one of them seized him by the top of his garment.

Here Abu Bakr interposed himself weeping and saying, "Would you kill a man for saying, 'Allah is my Lord'?" At this, they left him and turned upon Abu Bakr and dragged him along by the beard and head.

The Conversion of Hamzah:

Hamzah, the Prophet's foster brother and his young uncle, was a man of tall stature, and of high standing in Quraish. One day the Prophet was sitting outside the mosque near the Safa gate, when Abu Jahl passed by him. As the latter was hostile to the Prophet and to the new faith, he hurled a torrent of abuse at the Prophet, trying to bring him into disrepute, but the Prophet spoke no word to him, and returned home sadly. Within a little while, Hamzah arrived, with his bow slung over his shoulder, returning from hunting. When he was told of what Abu Jahl had done, he, fuming with rage, went out at a run to punish him. When he got to the mosque, he made straight for Abu Jahl; and, standing over him, he lifted up his bow and brought it down with all his force on his back, saying, "Will you insult Muhammad now that I follow his religion and say what he says? Hit me back if you can!" Some of the Makhzumites rose to their feet as if to help Abu Jahl, but Abu Jahl said, "Let Abu `Umarah (Hamzah) alone for, by Allah, I reviled his nephew with a right ugly reviling." From that day, Hamzah maintained his Islam and followed the Prophet's behests.

Quraish Negotiate with the Prophet:

Quraish now realized that the Prophet had become stronger, especially after finding a defenfer in Hamzah. This made it urgent for to figure out a way to stop the advance of the new faith, which, as it seemed to them, could only end in the

damage of their high standing amongst the Arabs. A prominent leader of the Makkan oligarchy, `Utbah Ibn Rabi`ah, was authorized to negotiate with the Prophet. Gathering in the Ka`bah, `Utbah said to the Prophet, "O my nephew, you are as we know a noble of the tribe and your ancestors are high in our pedigree. You have brought to your people a matter of great concern, whereby you have rifted their community, ridiculed their ways of life, spoken shamefully of their gods and their religion, and even denied pure faith to their ancestors. So hear what I am going to propose, and see if any of this is acceptable to you. If it is wealth you seek, we will contribute to make you the richest of us all. If it is honor you seek, we will make you our overlord and promise to take no decision except with your consent. If, even, you think of sovereignty, we will elect you our king. And if this ghost which comes to you – meaning the revelation and visitation of Gabriel – is such that you cannot defend yourself against it, we will find you a physician and spend our wealth until you are fully cured." When he finished, the Prophet said, "Now listen to me, Abu Al-Waleed." He thereupon recited to him: ***"In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Ha-Mim. A revelation from (Allah), Most Gracious, Most Merciful - A Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail - A Qur'an in Arabic, for people who understand - Giving Good News and admonition: yet most of them turn away, and so they hear not."*** (Fussilat: 1-5)

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him continued to recite Allah's words until he ended saying: ***"Among His Signs are the Night and Day, the Sun and the Moon. Adore not the sun and the moon, but adore Allah, Who created them, if it is Him ye wish to serve."*** (Fussilat: 37) Thereupon, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, placed his forehead on the ground in prostration. He then said, "You have heard what you have heard, Abu Al-Waleed; the rest remains

with you." When `Utbah returned to his companions, they asked him what had happened. He said: "I have heard words the like of which I have never yet heard. It is not poetry, spells, or soothsaying. Men of Quraish, hearken unto me and do as I advice. Leave this man entirely alone for, by Allah, the words I have heard from him will be blazed abroad." But they mocked at him saying, "He bewitched you with his tongue!" "This is my opinion," he said, "so do what you think fit."

Heads of Quraish decided to negotiate with Muhammad and argue with him so that they would not be blamed for having left a way unattempted. So they sent word to him to come and talk with them. When the Prophet came, they began to repeat the same offers they had already made him before. When they finished, the Prophet said: "I am not possessed, neither do I seek honor amongst you, nor kingship over you. But Allah has sent me to you as a Messenger and revealed to me a Book (the Qur'an) and ordered me to be a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. Even so have I brought you the message of my Lord, and have given you good advice. If you accept what I have brought you, that is your good future in this world and the next; but if you reject what I have brought, then I will patiently await Allah's judgment between us."

Having listened to these words, the negotiators requested that the Prophet ask his Lord to bestow on them gardens and palaces and treasures of gold and silvers, so that they might know his standing with his Lord and admit the truth of his mission. But the Prophet told them: "I am not one to ask of his Lord the like of such things, nor was I sent for that (purpose), but Allah has sent me to warn and give glad tidings." Thus the negotiations failed as the Prophet wanted nothing less than a complete submission to the new faith.

The Situation Grows More Serious:

The persecution of the Prophet and his followers was aggravated. Every clan that had Muslims among them started beating and imprisoning them, depriving them of food and water, and exposing them to the scorching heat of Makkah, with the aim of forcing them to forsake their religion. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, himself suffered various forms of torture and abuse.

`Abdullaah Ibn Mas`ood narrates: Once the Prophet was offering his prayers at the Ka`bah, when Abu Jahl was sitting with some of his companions. One of them said to the others, "Who amongst you will bring abdominal content (intestines, etc.) of a camel of Banu so and so and throw it on the back of Muhammad, when he prostrates himself?" The most unfortunate of them got up and brought it. He waited till the Prophet prostrated himself and then placed it on his back between his shoulders. I was watching but was hand-tied. I wish I had some people with me to stand out against them. They started laughing and falling on one another. Allah's Messenger remained in prostration and did not lift his head up till Fatimah (the Prophet's daughter) came and threw that (camel's abdominal contents) off his back. He raised his head and said thrice, "O Allah! Punish Quraish." Abu Jahl and his companions were upset when the Prophet invoked Allah against them as they had a conviction that prayer and invocation were accepted in this city (Makkah).

Narrating another story of torture, `Urwah Ibn Az-Zubair says: I asked `Abdullaah Ibn `Amr Ibn Al-`Aas, "Tell me about the worst thing the disbelivers did to the Prophet." He said, "While the Prophet was praying in the Hijr of the Ka`bah, `Uqbah Ibn Abi Mu'ait put his garment around the Prophet's

neck and throttled him violently. Abu Bakr came and caught him by his shoulder and pushed him away from the Prophet and said, "Would you kill a man for saying, 'Allah is my Lord'?"

The First Migration to Abyssinia:

The atrocities of Quraish against Muslims escalated, so the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, advised them to migrate to Abyssinia (Ethiopia), saying, "If you were to go to Abyssinia, you would find there a king under whom none suffers injustice." So some of the Companions left for Abyssinia, fleeing with their religion. Having learned of their migration, Quraish sent `Abdullaah Ibn Abi Rabee`ah and `Amr Ibn Al-`Aas, to Negus, demanding the deportation of the migrants back to Makkah.

Asked to clarify their position, Ja`far, the spokesman of Muslims, said: "Your majesty, we were people plunged into ignorance, worshipping idols, eating dead animals, committing indecency, severing ties of kinship, and the strong would devour the weak. Then Allah sent for us a Messenger from amongst us, one whose lineage, veracity, trustworthiness, and integrity we all knew. He called us to the Oneness of Allah, to worship Him only and renounce the stones and idols we had worshipped. He ordered us to be truthful, faithful to our trusts, kind to our relatives, and to abstain from all that is not righteous. As soon as we believed in him, our people persecuted us and circumscribed our lives. So we came to your country hoping for protection."

The Negus asked Ja`far to recite some verses from the Qur'an, and the latter recited the opening verses of *Surah,* "Maryam" (Mary), which praise Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Negus wept until his beard was wet, and so did his bishops. He

therefore refused to deliver the migrants to them, and the two envoys returned ignominiously to Makkah.

The Boycott:

Then came even harder times. When Quraish heard that the emigrants were comfortably accommodated in Abyssinia, that the Negus protected those who sought refuge in him, and that `Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab, one of their stalwarts, had converted to Islam, they grew more and more embittered and their hostility knew no bounds. Unanimously they decided to ostracize the Prophet's whole clan; the Hashimites, idolaters who protected them as well as Muslims who believed in him. A document was drawn up according to which it was forbidden for any one of them to hold any intercourse with that clan, sell to them or buy from them. This was to continue until the Hashimites outlawed the Prophet, or until he renounced his claim to Prophethood. The document was placed in the Ka`bah.

Wisely and quietly Abu Taalib took stock of the situation, and decided to withdraw to a valley on the outskirts of Makkah, where he and the Hashimites entrenched themselves. Deprived from everything for more than two years, the Hashimites and their supporters suffered untold hardships. Food was scarce; there was enough to meet their needs. At times they had nothing but the leaves of trees to sustain them. They lived in an ominous place where there was always the danger of a night attack.

However, the Prophet's courage and determination never weakened. He continued to go to the Ka`bah and pray publicly. He never doubted Allah's victory. Then came a breakthrough: five leaders of Quraish, after the passage of three years of the iniquitous siege and boycott, felt guilty about unjustly isolating

their kinsmen to perish in the valley. So they decided to tear the document and end the boycott. After he had a quarrel with Abu Jahl about the document, one of the leaders stepped into the Ka`bah and got the document. When he opened it, it was found that it was eaten by worms, all but the opening words "In Your Name, O God!" and thus the ban on Muslims was lifted.

Two Grave Events:

That, however, was not the end of hard times and suffering. The Prophet soon lost his uncle Abu Taalib, the greatest benefactor to Islam. Thirty-five days after Abu Taalib's demise, the Prophet's beloved wife, Khadeejah, also passed in Allah's mercy. The Prophet was so deeply shocked by these two sad events that he called that year "the year of sorrow".

It was then, Ibn Hisham states, that Quraish began to treat the Prophet extremely offensively in such a way that they never dared do in Abu Taalib's lifetime. On one occasion, when the Prophet was coming from the Ka`bah, a young lout took a handful of dust and threw it in the Prophet's face and over his head. The Prophet went into his house with the dust still on his head and one of his daughters got up to wash it away weeping. "Don't weep, little daughter," the Prophet said, "Allah will protect your father."

The Prophet's Migration to At-Taa'if:

With the growing hostility of Quraish, preaching Islam in Makkah seemed hopeless. So the Prophet decided to go to At-Taa'if, fifty miles southeast of Makkah, to seek help from the people of Thaqif. Accompanied by his servant Zayd, the Prophet walked up the rugged mountains to that city. On reaching there, he met with their leaders and invited them to

Islam, but even this city refused the heavenly message. Instead of welcoming the Prophet, people treated him harshly and stirred their slaves and louts to insult, shout at and hurl stones at him.

However, the Prophet was a rock of steadfastness and forbearance. In such a desperate situation, he took refuge in Allah and prayed: "O Allah, to You do I complain of my weakness, of me helplessness, and of my insignificance in the sight of people. O You Who are Ever-Merciful, You are the Lord of the oppressed, and You are my Lord. Into whose hands will You entrust me? Into the hands of some far off stranger who scowls at me? Or to an enemy whom You have empowered against me? If You are not angry with me, I do not care; but Your Clemency is wider for me. I seek refuge in the Light of Your Countenance whereby all darkness is illuminated and the affairs of this world and the next are rightly ordered, lest You may descend upon me Your anger, or lest Your wrath may beset me! It is for me to return to You until You are well pleased! There is no power nor might save through You." Then the Prophet gathered his strength and set off to Makkah again, still feeling confident of Allah's victory.

The Night Journey:

The Prophet's plaintive supplication in At-Taa'if was answered. Allah willed to relieve him and let him enjoy the Light of His Countenance. While the Prophet was sleeping in his house, Gabriel, the angel, came to him and led him on a night journey on the Buraq (a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey) to Jerusalem. There the Prophet led a host of Prophets in prayer. Then Gabriel ascended with him to heaven, where he saw the other Prophets of Allah. Finally, he reached the Lote Tree, which marks the knowledge of all

creatures. There, Gabriel communicated to him the revelation in *Surah,* "Al Najm": ***"Behold, the Lote-Tree was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable!) (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong! For truly did he see, of the signs of his Lord, the Greatest!"*** (Al Najm: 16-18)

In a famous *Hadith* narrated by Malik Ibn Sasaa', the Prophet said, "While I was at the House in a state midway between sleep and wakefulness, (an angel recognized me) as the man lying between two men. A golden tray full of wisdom and belief was brought to me and my body was cut open from the throat to the lower part of the `Abdomen and then my `Abdomen was washed with Zamzam water and (my heart was) filled with wisdom and belief. Al-Buraq, a white animal, smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me and I set out with Gabriel. When I reached the nearest heaven. Gabriel said to the heaven gate-keeper, 'Open the gate.' The gatekeeper asked, 'Who is it?' He said, 'Gabriel.' The gate-keeper,' Who is accompanying you?' Gabriel said, ' Muhammad.' The gate-keeper said, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel said, 'Yes.' Then it was said, 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!' Then I met Adam and greeted him and he said, 'You are welcomed O son and a Prophet.' Then we ascended to the second heaven. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel said, 'Gabriel.' It was said, 'Who is with you?' He said, ' Muhammad ' It was asked, 'Has he been sent for?' He said, 'Yes.' It was said, 'He is welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!"

Then I met Jesus and Yahya (John) who said, 'You are welcomed, O brother and a Prophet.' Then we ascended to the third heaven. It was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel said, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is with you? Gabriel said, ' Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been sent for?' 'Yes,' said Gabriel. 'He is

welcomed. What a wonderful visit his is!' (The Prophet added:). There I met Joseph and greeted him, and he replied, 'You are welcomed, O brother and a Prophet!' Then we ascended to the 4th heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met Idris and greeted him. He said, 'You are welcomed O brother and Prophet.' Then we ascended to the 5th heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in previous heavens. There I met and greeted Aaron, who said, 'You are welcomed, O brother and a Prophet".

Then we ascended to the 6th heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met and greeted Moses who said, 'You are welcomed O brother and. a Prophet.' When I proceeded on, he started weeping and on being asked why he was weeping, he said, 'O Lord! Followers of this youth who was sent after me will enter Paradise in greater number than my followers.' Then we ascended to the seventh heaven and again the same questions and answers were exchanged as in the previous heavens. There I met and greeted Abraham who said, 'You are welcomed o son and a Prophet.' Then I was shown Al-Bait-al-Ma`moor (i.e. Allah's House). I asked Gabriel about it and he said, This is Al Bait-ul-Ma`moor where 70,000 angels perform prayers daily and when they leave they never return to it (but always a fresh batch comes into it daily).'

Then I was shown Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (i.e. a tree in the seventh heaven) and I saw its Nabk fruits which resembled the clay jugs of Hajr (i.e. a town in Arabia), and its leaves were like the ears of elephants, and four rivers originated at its root, two of them were apparent and two were hidden. I asked Gabriel about those rivers and he sa id, 'The two hidden rivers are in Paradise, and the apparent ones are the Nile and the Euphrates.'

Then fifty prayers were enjoined on me. I descended till I met Moses who asked me, 'What have you done?' I said, 'Fifty prayers have been enjoined on me.' He said, 'I know the people better than you, because I had the hardest experience to bring Bani Israa'eel (Children of Israel) to obedience. Your followers cannot put up with such obligation. So, return to your Lord and request Him (to reduce the number of prayers.' I returned and requested Allah (for reduction) and He made it forty. I returned and (met Moses) and had a similar discussion, and then returned again to Allah for reduction and He made it thirty, then twenty, then ten, and then I came to Moses who repeated the same advice. Ultimately Allah reduced it to five. When I came to Moses again, he said, 'What have you done?' I said, 'Allah has made it five only.' He repeated the same advice but I said that I surrendered (to Allah's Final Order)'" Allah's Messenger was addressed by Allah as such: "I have decreed My obligation and have reduced the burden on My slaves, and I shall reward a single good deed as if it were ten good deeds."

The next morning the Prophet told Quraish of what he had seen. "How unbelievable!" They exclaimed, "the caravan takes a month to go Syria and a month to return, how could you do the return journey in one night?" When this question was posed to Abu Bakr, he said, "If he says so, then he is truthful. There is nothing to be surprised about. I believe him when he says that he received revelation from Heaven in an hour of the day or night. And that is beyond what you cavil at."

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, says, *"When Quraish disbelieved me (concerning my night journey) I stood up in Al-Hijr of the Ka`bah and Allah displayed Al-Aqsa Mosque before me, and I started to inform them about its signs while looking at it."*

The Pledge of Al `Aqabah:

Meanwhile, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, offered himself to the tribes inviting them to the Oneness of God and informing them of his Prophethood. One day he met with six men from Yathrib (Madeenah) at Al-`Aqabah. Then he called on them to embrace Islam, and they did. Then he asked them to swear to worship none but Allah, not to steal, not to commit *Zina* (unlawful sexual intercourse), not to kill your children, not to utter slander, and not to be disobedient when ordered to do good deeds.

Then the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Whoever amongst you fulfills his pledge will be rewarded by Allah. And whoever indulges in any one of them (except the ascription of partners to Allah) and is punished in this world, that punishment will be an expiation for the sin he committed. And if one indulges in any of them, and Allah conceals his sin, it is up to Him to forgive or punish him (in the Hereafter)."*

In the following year, twelve persons from the same city came and met the Prophet at Al-`Aqabah and gave him their pledge. When they left for Yathrib, the Prophet sent with them Mus`ab Ibn `Umair to recite the Qur'an for them and teach them the principles and dictates of Islam. Then Islam spread far and wide in Yathrib.

The Second Pledge of Al-`Aqabah:

In the following year, at the time of pilgrimage, seventy-three men and two women from Yathrib came to Makkah in order to vow allegiance to the Prophet and invite him to the city. At Al-`Aqabah, the Prophet accepted their pledge on the condition that they protected and defended him as they would

defend their own wives and children. Then one of their leaders stood up and said, "By him Who has sent you with the Truth (the message of Islam), we will protect you as we protect our wives and children."

Migration to Madeenah:

Having heard the new of the success of Muslims in preaching Islam in Madeenah, the infidels grew more and more furious and began to inflict intolerable atrocities on Muslims. At that point, Makkah was no longer a safe place for Muslims to dwell in. So, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, encouraged his followers to migrate and head for Madeenah. Only the Prophet, Abu Bakr, `Ali and those helpless noble souls, who had been detained in confinement or were unable to break free from slavery, remained there. When Abu Bakr asked the Prophet's permission to emigrate, the Prophet told him, *"Don't be in a hurry, for it may be that Allah will give you a companion."* Thus Abu Bakr understood that he must wait to emigrate with the Prophet.

A Plot to Kill the Prophet:

The time came for Quraish to take effective measures with a view to stopping this tidal wave, and preventing the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, from migrating to Madeenah, then a stronghold for Islam. They had convened a meeting at their council chamber (*Dar An-Nadwah*), and decided to besiege the Prophet's house and put him to death. As Abu Jahl suggested, each clan of Quraish was to nominate a strong, high-born young man, and at a given moment, those chosen men should together fall upon the Prophet and deal a mortal blow to him. Thus they would be relieved of him, and the blood wit would lie upon all the clans. The Banu `Abdu

Manaaf, the Prophet's clan, would not be able to fight them all and, would therefore have to accept the blood money (*Diyyah*) which they would all contribute to. It was about this mischievous plot that the following verse was revealed: ***"Remember How the Unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee (of thy home). They plot and plan and Allah too plans, but the best of planners is Allah."*** (Al-Anfal: 30)

Gabriel came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, to forewarn him about the conspiracy they contrived against him and to advise him not to sleep that night on the bed he normally slept on. Before much of the night had passed, the assassins assembled at the Prophet's door waiting for him to sleep so that they might kill him. Seeing what they were doing, the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him, asked `Ali to lie down on his bed and wrap himself in his mantle. `Ali, who realised the risk he was taking, accepted the task with great courage and fortitude.

The Prophet then went to the house of his companion Abu Bakr. "Allah has given me a permission to leave the city and to emigrate," the Prophet said. "Together with me?" said Abu Bakr. "Together with you," replied the Prophet. Two camels were saddled for them, and they hired `Abdullaah Ibn Urayqit, who then had not yet embraced Islam, to lead them on the way. They handed over to him their two camels which he kept and fed until the appointed time came.

Returning to his house, the Prophet told `Ali that he was about to leave for Yathrib (Madeenah), bidding him stay behind in Makkah in order to return goods which people had entrusted him with.

The assassins kept vigil all night long, waiting to fall upon the Prophet the moment he left his house, peeping every now and then through a hole in the door to make sure that he was still lying on his bed. The Prophet and `Ali were soon aware of their presence; and the Prophet took up a cloak in which he used to sleep and gave it to `Ali, saying, sleep you on my bed, and wrap yourself in this green cloak of mine. Sleep in it, and no harm shall befall you. Then the Prophet stepped out of his house casting a handful of dust at the assassins and began to recite: ***"Ya-sin. The Qur'an, full of wisdom. Thou art indeed one of the Messenger, on a straight way."*** (Yasin: 1-4) When he came to the words: ***"And We have put a bar in front of them and a bar behind them, and further, we have covered them up, so that they cannot see"***, (Yasin: 9) the Prophet went out of the house and passed unperceived through their midst and went on his way.

The Trip to Madeenah:

As the day dawned, the assassins barged into the Prophet's house and to their utter surprise, found that the person lying in the Prophet's bed was `Ali, and not Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This created a stir in the whole city.

On the other hand, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his companion Abu Bakr proceeded to hide out in a neglected cave a few miles south of Makkah, on Mount Thawr. When they had gone a little way beyond the precincts of Makkah, the Prophet halted his camel, and looking back, he said: "Of all Allah's earth, you are the dearest place unto me and the dearest unto Allah, and had not my people driven me out of you, I would not have left you."

Reaching the cave of Thawr, Abu Bakr first walked in, plugged all the holes, cleaned it and then asked the Prophet to step in. They stayed in that cave for three nights. During that period, `Abdullaah, son of Abu Bakr, would go to see them daily after dusk and apprise them of the situation in Makkah. `Amir Ibn Fuhayrah used to steal away unobserved every evening with a few goats to cover up the tracks of `Abdullaah and furnish them with a plentiful supply of milk. Asma', daughter of Abu Bakr, too came with a bag of provisions; but she had forgotten to bring a rope, so she took off her girdle and cut it into two, using one to tie the bag and keeping the other for herself. [2]

Abu Bakr was extremely afraid for the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. One day, the enemy reached the mouth of the cave and came so close to finding the two faithful souls. At that point, Abu Bakr whispered to the Prophet: "What if they were to look through the crevice and detect us? We are unarmed and at the bottom of the cave." Thereupon, the Prophet reassured him saying, ***"Have no fear, for Allah is with us."*** (Al Tawbah: 40) Then the Prophet said to him, "What do you think of two when Allah is their third?"

Quraish, on the other hand, were quite baffled and exasperated. A price was set upon the Prophet's head. Quraish offered a hundred camels as a reward for whoever would seize Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him and bring him back. This had spurred many to try their luck. Among those who were on the lookout for the Prophet and his companion in order to win the reward was Suraqah Ibn Malik. He, as Ibn Al-Qayyim narrates, received information that a party of four had been spotted on a certain route. So he decided to pursue it

[2]For this reason she earned the title "*Dhatu-Nitaqain*", or the woman of the two girdles. (trans.)

secretly so that he alone would be the winner of the reward. He mounted a swift horse and went in pursuit of the Prophet and Abu Bakr. On the way, the horse stumbled and Suraqah fell on the ground. Afterwards, he resumed the chase. He was once again curbed the same way, but the lust for material gain made him pay no heed to it. Again he swung himself into the saddle and galloped on at a breakneck speed till he came quite close to the Prophet. Abu Bakr's heart agitated and told the Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, we are done for." But the Prophet said, "Be not cast down, for Allah is certainly with us."

The repeated stumbling of Suraqah's horse and his falling to the ground made him realize that the Prophet was protected against him, and that it was a constant warning from Allah because of his evil design against the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. His heart immediately changed and the sworn enemy turned into an honest believer. Approaching the Prophet with a penitent heart, Suraqah begged of him forgiveness in all humility. The Prophet forgave him and confirmed it with a token written by Abu Bakr on a piece of parchment. Then Suraqah hurried back to Makkah and tried to foil the attempts of those who went out in pursuit of the Prophet and his companion

The Prophet Arrives at Madeenah:

In Madeenah, people were eagerly expecting the Prophet's arrival. They would go out every morning beyond the fields and palm groves onto the lava tract. After they had gone some distance they would stop and wait until the heat of the sun became unbearable; they would then return to their homes. One day they had gone out as usual and after a long tiring watch, they retired to the city. Then a Jew, catching a glimpse of three travelers winding their way to Madeenah, called at the top of

his voice: "O Sons of Qaylah, he has come, he has come!" The voice was immediately taken up, and men, women and children went out hurriedly to greet the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, while chanting:

> The White Moon[3] has risen over us,
> Coming from the valley of Wadaa`.
> Thus we must all show gratefulness
> So long as there's one to call to Allah.
> O you who've been raised amongst us
> Obeyed all that you have conveyed.
> You've come to give this city nobleness.
> Welcome, O best caller to Allah.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, stayed three days in Quba', during which he laid the foundations of his mosque, the first to be built in Islam, and which has been praised in the Qur'an in the following verse: ***"There is a mosque whose foundation was laid for the first day on piety; it is more worthy of thy standing forth (for prayer) therein. In it are men who love to be purified; and Allah loveth those who make themselves pure."*** (Al Tawbah: 108)

On Friday he set out to Madeenah amidst cordial greetings of his Madinite followers who lined his path. At noon, he halted at a place in the Vale of Banu Salim Ibn `Awf, where he performed the *Jum`ah* prayer (i.e. Friday congregational prayer) and delivered the first *Khutbah* (i.e. sermon) in Islam.

After leading the *Jum`ah* prayer, the Prophet resumed his journey towards Madeenah. People of Madeenah came streaming forth, and vied with one another to invite the Prophet

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[3] Meaning the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. (trans.)

to their homes. Each and every one was anxious to receive him and said, "Alight here, O Messenger of Allah, for we have strength and protection for you, and abundance." More than once did a man or a group of men belonging to the same clan take hold of the halter of the Prophet's mount Al-Qaswa'. But each time the Prophet said, "Let her go her way, for she is commanded by Allah. Wherever she stops will be my abode."

The mount moved onward until she stopped before the house of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari. The fortunate host stepped forward with unbounded joy for the Divine Blessing Allah bestowed on him, welcomed the Prophet and requested him to enter his house. Abu Ayyub, out of the profound respect that he had for the Prophet, offered to vacate the upper storey, but the Prophet preferred the lower one, being more accessible to his visitors

The Building of the Mosque:

The first task which the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, undertook in Madeenah was to build a mosque. He gave orders that it should be built where his mount knelt. He purchased the place from two orphans belonging to the *Ansar*. Part of the land was a graveyard for the polytheists, where some graves were still unleveled. There were some date-palm trees there, too. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, ordered that the graves of the polytheists be dug out, the unleveled land leveled and the date-palm trees cut down. The staunch Muslims immediately fell to work. They vertically aligned the cut date-palm trees towards the *qibla*[4] of the mosque, as a wall, and built two stone side-walls for the mosque. The Companions of the Prophet would fetch the stones while reciting some poetic verses. The Prophet worked side by

[4] The direction to which Muslims turn in prayer. (trans.)

side with the *Ansar* and *Muhajirun*[5] to construct the mosque. He never even hesitated to carry stones on his back and helped in setting them in proper place, while chanting:

> There is no life but the life of the Hereafter
> O Allah! Forgive the *Ansar* and *Muhajirun*

Al-Bukhari reports on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, used to offer prayer whenever prayer was due, regardless of where he was. He would pray even in the folds of sheep. Then he ordered that the mosque be built. He sent for the chiefs of Banu An-Najjar, and told them, "O Banu An-Najjar! Name whatever price you wish for this garden of yours." They replied, "No! By Allah, we do not demand its price except from Allah." In that garden, there were graves of pagans, unleveled land with holes and pits etc., as well as date-palm trees. The Prophet ordered that the graves of the pagans be dug up, the unleveled land leveled and the date-palm trees cut down. The trunks of the trees were thereupon arranged so as to form the wall facing the *qibla*. Stone pillars were built at the sides of its gate. The Companions of the Prophet used to carry the stones reciting some lyrics. The Prophet joined them both in working and chanting. They would say, "O Allah! There is no good but the good of the Hereafter, so bestow victory on the *Ansar* and *Muhajirun*."

Establishing Brotherhood Among Muslims:

Just as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, built the mosque in order to be a center of the new Muslim community, he instituted a pact of brotherhood between the

[5] *Al- Ansar* is the title given to the Muslims of Madeenah, whereas *Al-Muhajirun* is that given to Muslims of Makkah.

Ansar and *Muhajirun*, with a view to uniting the community of the believers still further. That was a necessary step since the Muslims of Makkah, who had left their homes and bid their friends and relative goodbye, were overcome by a sad feeling of loneliness. This pact of brotherhood was thus to help them cast off their loneliness and attune to the changed circumstances.

According to the new pact, when either of the two Muslims who had been paired as brothers passed away, his property was to be inherited by his brother-in-faith. This practice continued until the Battle of Badr, when Allah, exalted be He, revealed: *"And those who accept Faith subsequently, and emigrate, and fight for the Faith in your company, - they are of you. But kindred by blood have prior rights against each other in the Book of Allah. "Verily Allah is well-acquainted with all things."* (Al Anfaal: 75) The regular rule of inheritance, after the revelation of this verse, was allowed to take its usual course.

Such brotherhood was unique in the history of the world. It was so strong that it surpassed blood relationships. Al-Bukhari narrates that when Muslims came to Madeenah, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, established a bond of brotherhood between `Abdur-Rahman Ibn `Awf and Sa`d Ibn Ar-Rabie`. Sa`d Ibn Ar-Rabie` told his brother, "I am the richest among the *Ansar*, so I will give you half of my wealth. I have two wives, you may look at them and I will divorce whichever of the two you may choose, so that, after the expiry of her `*Iddah* [6], you may marry her." `Abdur-Rahman replied, "I am not in need of all that. Kindly direct me to the market so that I may earn my own fortune." `Abdur-Rahman headed for the market the following day and brought some dried buttermilk

[6] The period which a woman has to wait before she can remarry in order to verify that she is not pregnant, or out of mourning for her deceased husband. (trans.)

(yogurt) and butter, and then began frequenting the market since then. Few days later, `Abdur-Rahman came with traces of yellow (scent) on his body. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, asked him whether he had got married. He replied in the affirmative. The Prophet said, "Whom have you married?" He replied, "A woman from the *Ansar*." Then the Prophet asked, "How much did you pay her?" He replied, " (I gave her) a piece of gold equal in weight to a date stone (or a date stone of gold)!" The Prophet said, "Hold a wedding banquet (*Walimah*) even if over one sheep."

Abu Hurairah also narrates that the *Ansar* once came to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, to request that their orchards be distributed equally among Muslims of Madeenah and their Makkan brethren. But the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was reluctant to have them shoulder this heavy burden. It was, however, decided that the *Muhajirun* would work in the orchards along with the *Ansar* and the yield would be divided equally amongst them.

It is worth mentioning that by infusing such spirit of brotherhood and selflessness in his followers, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, wiped out traces of the long-established enmity among different tribes and clans, particularly the *Aws* and *Khazraj*.

Friendly Relation with the Jews:

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, then sought to establish friendly relations between the Muslims and the Jews of Madeenah, particularly those of Banu An- Nadeer, Banu Quraizah and Banu Qainuqaa`. He made a covenant of mutual obligations, forming them into a single community but allowing for differences between the two religions. Here are

some of its provisions, which would clearly give an idea of the rights of non-Muslims in a Muslim state:

- Muslims of Quraish and Yathrib, and those who followed them and labored with them are one *Ummah* (community), to the exclusion of other people.

- Emigrants of Quraish shall unite to pay the blood money among themselves, and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers.

-Believers shall not leave anyone among them destitute (*Mufrah*) by not paying his redemption money or indemnity in kindness.

- Whoever is rebellious or seeks to spread enmity, or sin, or injustice, or corruption among the believers, the hand of every pious Muslim shall be against him, even if he be his son.

-Allah's protection (*Dhimah*) is one that is (and is equally) extended to the humblest of the believers.

- Believers are supported by each other.

- Whosoever of the Jews follows us (the believers) shall have aid and succor; they shall not be wronged, nor shall their enemies be helped.

- The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the Cause of Allah. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.

- Believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the cause of Allah.

- Whosoever kills a believer for any just cause shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.

- It shall be unlawful for a believer who abides by what is in this document and believes in Allah and the Judgment Day to neither help a criminal (*Muhdith*) nor give him refuge. And whosoever helps him or gives him refuge shall incur Allah's curse and wrath on the Day of Resurrection, and neither repentance nor ransom will be accepted from him.

- Whenever you differ about a matter, it must be referred to Allah and to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

- The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers.

- The Jews of Banu `Awf are one community with the believers. To the Jews is their religion, and to the Muslims is their religion; those who behave unjustly and sinfully will not hurt but themselves and their families.

- The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims theirs. Each must help the other against whoever attacks people of this document.

- They (all parties involved in the covenant) must seek mutual advice and consultation, promote righteousness not sin.

- The oppressed must be helped.

- A man is not to be held accountable for his ally's misdeeds.

The Change of *Qibla*:

Till then, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, used to pray with his face turned to Jerusalem. The Jews imagined that he was thus explicitly leaning towards Judaism and that he stood in need of instruction. The Prophet received a Divine command to change the *qibla* from Jerusalem to the Ka`bah at Makkah. It is said that the change took place on Sha`ban, 2 AH (February, 624 AC).

This was a change of far-reaching importance, and it gave rise to different reactions in different circles. It strengthened the Muslims' loyalty to their faith and their Messenger. They expressed their faith in Muhammad as the recipient of Divine revelation and accepted the change most willingly. The Jews, on the other hand, were indignant and tauntingly said: "Muhammad, in changing the *qibla*, has opposed all earlier Prophets. Were he a real Prophet, he would not do like that." The hypocrites, Ibn Al-Qayyim narrates, said: "We are not sure in which direction the Prophet wants to turn for prayer. If the previous position was right, he has abandoned it; and if this new position is right, it means that he had erred before."

Referring to these different objections, Allah the Almighty says: *"The fools among the people will say: "What hath turned then from the qibla to which they were used?" Say: "To Allah belong both East and West: He guideth whom He will to a Way that is straight." Thus have We made you an Ummat justly balanced. That ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the qibla to which thou was used, only to test those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heals (from a Faith). Indeed it was (a change) momentous,*

except to those guided by Allah. And never would Allah make your faith of no effect. For Allah is to all people most surly full of Kindness, Most Merciful." (Al Baqarah: 142-143.)

The Great Battle of Badr:

When Quraish came to learn that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was safe in Madeenah, out of their reach, and that his religion was spreading speedily, they started desperately preparing for an all-out attack in order to exterminate the nascent power of Islam.

It so happened that in the second year after the Hijrah, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, received news that Abu Sufyaan Ibn Harb was heading home from Syria leading a large caravan of Quraish, containing their merchandise. The Prophet called on Muslims to go out and intercept its passage so that they might compensate for the loss and properties they left behind in Makkah. Abu Sufyaan, on learning of the intention of Muslims, lead his caravan off the main route, and sent Damdam Ibn `Amr Al-Ghifari to call Quraish to defend their merchandise. Upon reaching Quraish, Damdam cried: "Men of Quraish, the transport camels, the transport camels! Your goods which are with Abu Sufyaan! Muhammad and his Companions are lurking, lying in ambush for them! Help! Help!"

The effect of this clamor and commotion was instantaneous. An army of about a thousand men, a hundred cavalrymen and a large supply caravan, was quickly mustered. The excited throng of soldiers proceeded, under the leadership of Abu Jahl, to avenge the rumored deaths of all those who had been with the caravan.

Then came the news that Quraish had set out to rescue their caravan, and that Abu Jahl was on his way spearheading a large army. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, felt bound to apprise his followers of the gravity of the situation and consult them to let theirs be the choice between advancing and retreating. Abu Bakr and `Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, spoke for the *Muhajirun* in favor of advancing. Then Al Miqdad Ibn `Amr rose to his feet and said: "O Messenger of Allah, proceed where Allah directs you to, for we are with you. We will not say unto you as the children of Israel said unto Moses, "*Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two while we sit here* (Al Ma'idah: 24), but we will say: Go you and your Lord and fight, and we will fight along with you." The Prophet thanked him and blessed him. He then asked the *Ansar* to give him advice. Thereupon, Sa`d Ibn Mu`aadh rose to his feet and said: "O Messenger of Allah, we repose faith in you and believe what you have vouchsafed to us, and we bear witness that what you have brought us is the truth, and we have given you our binding oaths to hear and obey. So do whatever you like, and we are with you. By Him Who has sent you with the truth, if you should bid us cross yonder the sea and plunge into it ourselves, we would plunge into it with you, no man would stay behind. Neither are we averse from encountering our enemy tomorrow. We are well tried in war and trustworthy in combat. It may be that Allah will show you prowess of ours such as shall bring coolness to your eyes. So lead us on with the blessing of Allah."

The Prophet rejoiced at Sa`d's words and was really impressed by the fidelity and spirit of sacrifice which his Companions showed at this critical juncture. He said to them: "Go forward and be of good cheer, for Allah has promised me one of the two parties, even now, by Allah, it is as though I can see the places where the enemies would be killed."

Abu Sufyaan, on seeing that the caravan had escaped unscathed, sent word to Quraish asking them to go back to Makkah. but Abu Jahl vehemently objected, saying: "By God, we will not return until we have been at Badr. Three days will we stay there; we will slaughter camels and feast and make flow the wine and singers shall sing for us, and the Arabs will hear how we marched forth and learn of our mighty gathering, and they will stand in awe of us forever. Onwards to Badr!"

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, knew that it was imperative to reach the waters of Badr before the enemy did, so he ordered an immediate advance. On reaching the water of Badr, the Prophet ordered a halt at the first well the Muslims came to. Thereupon, Al-Hubaab Ibn Al-Mundhir came to him and said: "O Messenger of Allah, is this a place which Allah ordered you to occupy, so that we should neither advance nor retreat from it, or it is a matter of opinion and military tactics?" The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, replied that it was merely a matter of opinion and military tactics, whereupon Al-Hubab said: "This is not the place to halt, but take us on until we come to that one of the large wells which is nearest the enemy. Let us halt there and stop up the wells that lie beyond it and make for ourselves a cistern so that we may have plenty of water. Then we could fight their enemy who would have nothing to drink." The Prophet at once agreed and Al-Hubab's plan was carried out to the letter. Then, Sa'd Ibn Mu`aadh said to the Prophet: "O Prophet of Allah, let us built a booth (of palm-branches) for you and put your riding camel beside it. Then will we encounter the enemy, and if Allah grants us victory over them, that is what we fervently desire. But, if not, then you can mount your camel and join those whom we left behind us. O Prophet of Allah, our love for you is not greater than theirs, and if they had known you were fighting, they would not have stayed behind." The Prophet

thanked him, invoked blessings on him, and the booth was constructed.

It was Friday 17th Ramadan, 2 AH (17th March, 623 AC) that Quraish marched forth and climbed the hill of `Aqanqal. When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, saw them descending the slope into the valley of Yalyal towards Badr, he prayed: "O Allah, here come Quraish exulting in their arrogance and vanity, contending with you and belying your Messenger. O Allah, grant the victory which you did promise me. O Allah, put them to rout this morning."

It was at Badr that the two parties came face to face. The battle broke out on Friday morning, 2 AH. The Prophet drew up his little army, arranged the ranks and exhorted the Muslims to fight in the Cause of Allah, saying: "By Him in Whose Hand the soul of Muhammad is, no man will be killed this day, fighting against them in steadfast hope of (Allah's) reward, advancing not retreating, except Allah shall straightaway admit him to Paradise."

Then the Prophet, in the company of Abu Bakr, returned to his booth and kept beseeching Allah: "O Allah, I implore you to fulfil Your covenant and promise. O Allah, if this small force (of Muslims) is vanquished, You will not be worshipped on earth." The Prophet repeated these words in such humility and pathos that his mantle slipped down his shoulders in a state of deep absorption. Abu Bakr, who was standing near by, consoled him thus: "Enough, Messenger of Allah! Allah will for sure fulfil for you what he has promised you."

Immediate was the response from Allah, Who sent down angels from heaven for the help and assistance of the Prophet and his Companions. Then the battle grew fierce, and the

Prophet took a handful of pebbles and cast it at the enemy, saying: "Defaced be their faces." Then the battle ended in the crushing defeat of the disbelievers. About seventy men of Quraish were killed and a similar number was taken as captives. Fourteen Muslims died as martyrs.

Then the Prophet ordered that the corpses of the enemies be thrown into a pit. The Prophet stood by the pit and said: "O men of pit, kinsmen of your Prophet, ill your kinship you showed him. Lair you called me, when others took me in; against me you fought, when others helped me to victory. Have you found it to be true, what your Lord promised you? I have found it to be true, what my Lord promised me." Some of his Companions wondered at his speaking to dead bodies, whereupon the Prophet said: "Your hearing of what I say is not better than theirs, only they cannot answer me."

Then the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, consulted his Companions regarding the captives. `Umar was of the opinion that they should be killed, whereas Abu Bakr thought that it was better to accept a ransom and let them go their way. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, agreed on the opinion of Abu Bakr and released the captives. But the verses of the Qur'an were then revealed in favor of `Umar's opinion. Allah the Almighty says: "*It is not fitting a* Prophet *that he should have prisoners of war until be hath thoroughly subdued the land. Ye look for the temporal goods of world; but Allah looketh to the hereafter: and Allah is exalted in might, wise.*" (Al Anfal: 67)

The Jews of Banu Qainuqaa` Break the Covenant:

Following the battle of Badr, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, assembled Banu Qainuqaa` in the

market and addressed them as follows: "O Jews, beware lest you should call down upon yourselves the wrath of Allah which had just fallen upon Quraish, and embrace Islam. You know that I am a Prophet who has been sent (by Allah): you find that in your scriptures and Allah's covenant with you." "O Muhammad," they replied, " be not deluded by that encounter with a people who had no knowledge of war, and the fact that you got the better of them; for by God if we fight you, you will know that we are the men to be feared." The Prophet turned and left them, and they imagined for the moment that they had triumphed.

A few days later, at the same market place, an incident occurred which brought things to a climax. A Muslim woman came to the market to sell or exchange some goods, whereupon a Jewish goldsmith tried to provoke her. He tied the edging of her garment to her back, and when she got up, her private parts were uncovered. The Jews thereupon roared in laughter. A Muslim man, who happened to be present at the time, rushed to her rescue and killed the goldsmith. The Jews immediately fell upon him and killed him.

Within a few hours, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, besieged them on all sides by an army which outnumbered their own until they surrendered unconditionally. Then `Abdullaah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salool went to the Prophet and approaching him he said: "O Muhammad, deal kindly with my confederates." The Prophet paid no attention to him, and then when Ubayy repeated the same words he turned away from him, whereupon the latter clutched him by his coat of mail, thrusting his hand into the neck of it. The Prophet's face grew dark with anger. He said: "Confound you, let go your hold." But Ubayy said: "I will not let my hold go until you deal kindly with my confederates. Four hundred men without mail and

three hundred mailed protected me from the red and from the black[7]; would you cut them down in one morning? By God, I am a man who fears that circumstances may change." The Prophet said, "I spare their lives." He ordered that the Jews of Banu Qainuqaa` should forfeit all their possession and be exiled. They then settled on the borders of Syria.

It is said that `Ubaadah Ibn As-Saamit, may Allah be pleased with him, allied with those Jews as had `Abdullaah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salool. `Ubaadah went to the Prophet and, approaching him, he said: "O Messenger of Allah, I take Allah and his Prophet and the believers as my friends and protectors, and I renounce my covenant and friendship with the disbelievers. It was about him that the verse was revealed: *"O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for your friends and protectors. They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily, Allah guideth not a people unjust."* (Al Ma'idah: 51)

The Battle of Uhud:

The defeat at Badr was an ignominy which the pride of Quraish could not leave unavenged. Revenge was, therefore, the catch-word all over Makkah. The disbelievers decided to wage a retaliatory war in the hope of breaking the back of Muslims. It was also decided that the profits of the escaped caravan headed by Abu Sufyaan should be devoted to providing equipment to the Quraish army. Thus they mobilized an army of three thousand pitched warriors, seven hundred of whom were mailed soldiers, and two hundred well-mounted cavalry with three thousand camels and fifteen women, and then marched towards Makkah.

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[7] I.e. all men whatsoever. (trans.)

Receiving news of the advance of the Quraish army, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, convened a meeting in the mosque in order to discuss this issue with his Companions. He, peace and blessings be upon him, was of the opinion that Muslims should not fight, but if the enemy attacked them, they would engage in the battle in self-defense. But young Muslims, particularly those who did not participate in Badr, were eager to go out and encounter the Quraish army. When the Prophet saw that it was the majority that supported fighting the enemy, he agreed to go for the encounter and commanded them to prepare for the battle.

After the prayer, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, walked with Abu Bakr and `Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, into his house to make preparations. Muslim men lined up outside and Sa`d Ibn Mu`aadh reproved them saying: "You have compelled the Prophet to go out against his will, albeit the command comes down to him from Heaven. Put back the decision into his hands and let him decide afresh." In a little while, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, stepped out of his chamber, clad in mail and helmet, his sword hanging from a leather girdle and his shield slung over his shoulder. Many of the men by that time had regretted the course they had taken, and said that he should do what the Prophet deemed fit and that they would follow him willingly, whereupon the Prophet told them: "It is not befitting a Prophet, after he has put on his armor, to take it off until Allah has judged between him and his enemies."

Therefore, the Prophet marched out with an army of almost one thousand soldiers, among whom were only two horsemen and a hundred men in army. On the way, `Abdullaah Ibn Ubayy Ibn Salool, the chief of the hypocrites, along with three hundred, men deserted the Muslim army, thus reducing it

to seven hundred, which was to face an army four times its number.

The remainder of the Muslims marched on until they reached the mountain of Uhud. There the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, drew up his little army and ordered them to stand in front of the mountain, so that they might be protected from behind. He then placed a batch of fifty archers and appointed `Abdullaah Ibn Jubair Al-Ansari as their commander. He said to them: "Don't leave your places; if you should see us conquer the enemy, do not leave your places; and if you should see them conquer us, do not (come to our rescue)."

Meanwhile the Quraish army advanced. Abu Sufyaan commanded the center while the right wing was headed by Khaalid and the left by `Ikrimah. The encounter took place near the mountain of Uhud to the south of Madeenah.

In the first round of the battle, Muslims were victorious. Quraish received shocks one after another with the fall of their warriors. The devoted Companions, such as Abu Dujanah, Hamzah and `Ali, Az-Zubair displayed wonderful feats of gallantry against the overwhelming odds which stood unparalleled and created consternation and confusion within the disbelievers hosts.

At that point, the disbelievers staggered and took to their heels. Muslims followed them for a distance, but then occupied themselves with collecting the spoils. The archers on the top of the mountain too ran down from their position to collect booty. In vain did their commander `Abdullaah Ibn Jubair remind them of the Prophet's order not to leave their posts on any account. They replied that the Prophet had not meant them to

stay there forever. The battle was over then, they said, and the disbelievers routed. Only `Abdullaah and ten others remained in their positions, following the Prophet's commands.

The shrewd Khaalid Ibn Al-Waleed, cavalry commander of the Quraish army, on seeing archers abandon their posts, seized the opportunity and led his men at full gallop to attack Muslims at the rear. The tide of the battle completely changed: many Muslims were slain, while others took to their heels. The Prophet called on them to return, but their ears were deafened to his voice.

The Prophet himself, peace and blessings be upon him, sustained serious injuries: a sharp stone struck him in the mouth, gashing his lower lip and breaking one of his canine teeth. Moreover, two of the helmet rings pierced into his cheek. The blood began to run down his face and he began to wipe it away, while saying, "How can a people prosper when they have stained their Prophet's face with blood while he called them to their Lord?"

Then the disbelievers approached the Prophet to slay him, but Abu Dhujanah, may Allah be pleased with him, shielded him with his body. Arrows kept falling on his back. Also, Sa`d Ibn Abu Waqqas and Nusaybah Um `Emarah Al-Ansariyyah remained steadfast in their defense of the noble Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Ubayy Ibn Khalaf, furthermore, approached with a drawn sword, aiming at killing the Prophet, but before he could strike a blow, the Prophet had thrust him in the neck[8].

Among the Muslims who were killed in the battle of Uhud was the Prophet's nephew Hamzah. Before the battle,

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[8] This is the only case the Prophet was narrated to have killed a person. (trans.)

Hind bint Abu Sufyaan sent word to Wahshyy Ibn Harb asking him to kill Hamzah, who had killed both her father and brother in the battle of Badr. When the battle grew fierce, Wahshyy kept watching the movements of Hamzah from behind a stone, and caught him off guard striking him with a javelin until he fell dead to the ground. Then he ripped open his belly, cut out his liver and brought it to Hind. She took it from him and bit away a piece of it, chewed and swallowed a morsel in fulfillment of her vow and spat out the rest. She then went to his see his corpse and on reaching it she cut off his nose and ears and parts of his flesh. Then she took off her necklaces and pendants and anklets and gave them to Wahshyy as a reward.

The Deportation of Banu An-Nadeer:

The Jews of Banu An-Nadeer had long been confederates of Banu `Amir. The Prophet went to them to ask for their help in paying the blood money for the two men of Banu `Amir whom `Amr Ibn Umayyah Ad-Damryy had killed after he had given them an assurance of security. They agreed to what the Prophet requested. Despite the covenant between them and Muslims, hardly did they conceal their hostility anymore. They plotted to kill the Prophet. `Amr Ibn Jihash An-Nadryy volunteered to carry out the plot and went up to throw down a rock upon the Prophet.

While the Prophet and his Companions were sitting in front of one of their forts, Gabriel came to him and told him of their evil design. The Prophet immediately rose and left the company without a word, followed by his Companions, and returned to Madeenah. He explained to his Companions the treachery which the Jews meditated against him, and then sent Muhammad Ibn Maslamah to Banu An- Nadeer with the message: "By plotting to kill me, you have broken the pact I

made with you. I give you ten days to depart from my country. Whosoever of you is seen after that shall be beheaded."

Most of them had already started preparing to leave, but Ubayy Ibn Salool sent word egging them on to remain and promising his support. So they sent to the Prophet telling him that they would not leave their possessions and their dwellings at any cost. Receiving their message, the Prophet said: "Allah Ever-Great. The Jews have declared war." Immediately the Prophet mustered an army and placed the banner in the hands of `Ali Ibn Abi Taalib, and then set off for Banu An- Nadeer, a little to the south of Madeenah.

At first they simply kept up an exchange of arrows and stones, relying on their forts. But when the Muslim army managed to besiege them on all sides, and their allies stirred not a finger to their aid, they were wise enough to leave. The Prophet allowed them to take anything they could carry on camels, except arms and armors. So they loaded their camels with all they could carry, and destroyed their houses so that Muslims might not make use of them. Some of them went to Khaibar and others headed for Syria.

The Battle of the Trench:

The Jews of Banu An- Nadeer who had been expelled from their land in the previous year settled in Jewish communities adjacent to Madeenah. It was only natural that they would seek revenge and incite tumult against Muslims. So, a number of their leaders, headed by Huyayy Ibn Akhtab, went to Quraish in Makkah and invited them to join them in a joint attack on the Prophet in order to get rid of him altogether and put an end to his message. Quraish enthusiastically accepted the invitation and said: "O Jews, you are the people of the first

scripture and you know the nature of our dispute with Muhammad. Is our religion the best or his?" the replied: "Your religion is indeed better than his, and you are nearer the truth than he is."

Quraish were highly delighted at those words and joined hands with the Jews to fight the common foe. Then the Jewish leaders went off to Ghatafaan and invited them to the fighting, and they too joined the confederacy.

When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, heard of the intention of his enemies, he summoned his men to a consultation as to what would be the best plan of action. Salmaan, the Persian, suggested a stratagem as yet unknown to the Arabs: it was to dig a trench around Madeenah. He said to the Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah, in Persia when we feared an attack of horses, we would surround ourselves with a trench, so let us dig a ditch about us now." The Prophet approved of his suggestion and the task of digging began. That was in Shawwal, 5Ah.

Many *Hadiths* show that the Muslims dug this ditch under very tiring conditions. They had to work with empty stomach exposed to the blasts of cold wind. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, worked side by side with his Companions in digging the trench, and shared with them the pangs of hunger. Anas reported that the Prophet saw the Muhajirun and Ansar digging in the cold morning. They had no slaves to work for them. When the Prophet saw how much hardship and hunger they were suffering, he said:

> There is no life but the life of the hereafter
> O Allah! Forgive the Ansar and Muhajirun

They said in reply,

We are the ones who've swore allegiance to Muhammad
To fight and strive in Allah's Cause as long as we live

Muslims had hardly finished the preparations when the formidable army of the confederates, consisting of ten thousand warriors, knocked all the gates of Madeenah with the determination to crush Islam. The whole of Arabia was thirsting for the Muslim blood.

Moreover, Huyayy Ibn Akhtab sought to induce the Jews of Banu Quraizah, who had been allies of the Prophet, to renounce their pact with Muhammad and join the camp of disbelievers, promising them all kinds of concession and rewards. The Jews of Banu Quraizah agreed and joined the hostile camp. When the Prophet heard of their renunciation of the pact, he was visibly troubled; and so he sent Az-Zubair to find out the truth of the matter. When Az-Zubair learned that it was true, he persuaded them to revert to the pact before it was too late, reminding them of the fates of Banu Qainuqaa` and Banu An-Nadeer. But they were now confident of the victory, and so they said: "Who is the messenger of Allah? There is no pact between us and him nor is there any agreement."

The allied forces with full supplies of arms and provisions had besieged Madeenah, while Muslims, hungry and weary, guarded the ditch day and night. They confederates made several attempts to draw the Muslims out from their trenches. Muhammad, however, resisted all temptation to fight the enemy, except on his own terms. Every attack on the moat was repulsed with a heavy loss to the confederacy. Now and again there was a rain of arrows, a charge of horsemen, movement of great companies of men - but, for all their stratagems, the Makkans and their confederates found Madeenah impregnable.

Then came Nu`aim Ibn Mas`ood, who had secretly embraced Islam, to the Prophet in order to declare his belief in him and bear witness to what he preached. He told the Prophet that he had friendly relations with both Jews and Makkans. "Messenger of Allah," he said, "bid me do what you will, for you have but to order me, and I will fulfil your orders. My people know nothing of my Islam." Thereupon, the Prophet tried a clever trick aimed at disparaging the disbelieving enemies. He said to Nu`aim: "Set them at odds with each other as much as you can. Say what you wish to draw them off from us, for war is deception."

Nu`aim went to Banu Quraizah and told them that if Quraish and Ghatafaan failed to inflict a decisive defeat on their enemy, they would return home and leave them at the mercy of Muhammad and his Companions. He advised them not to strike one blow for Quraish until they gave leading men as hostages, in guarantee that they would not withdraw until the enemy had been overwhelmed. The Banu Quraizah enthusiastically accepted his advice.

Then he went to Quraish and told them that the Jews of Banu Quraizah had regretted preaching their pact with the Prophet and secretly agreed together to take as hostages some of the leading men of Quraish and Ghatafaan and give them to him so that he might cut off their heads. "So if the Jews ask you for some of your men as hostages, give them not one man of yours." Then he went to his own people and other clans of Ghatafaan and told them the same as he had told Quraish. So Nu`aim managed to sow distrust among confederates. Recriminations were on many tongues and the expedition had virtually failed.

For three days, after the prayer, the Prophet supplicated:

"O Allah, Revealer of the Book, Swift Caller to account, put the confederates to rout, put them to rout and cause them to Quake." In response to the Prophet's supplication, Allah sent down a piercing wind with torrents of rain which played havoc with the confederates camp. It blew for three days and nights so terribly that not a tent could be kept standing, not a fire burning, not a pot boiling, and men crouched shivering on the ground, huddled together for warmth. The confederates were in utter misery, and so they decided to retreat.

The Battle of Banu Quraiẕah:

`A'ishah, Allah be pleased with her, narrates: "When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, returned from the (battle of) the trench and laid down his arms and took a bath, Gabriel came to him while he was shaking the dust off his head, and said, 'You have laid down your arms! By Allah, I have not laid down my arms yet. Set out for them.' The Prophet said, 'Where to go?' Gabriel answered, 'Towards there.' pointing towards Banu Quraizah, so the Prophet set out to attack them. "

The Prophet ordered that none of his Companions should perform the `Asr Prayer except at Banu Quraizah. The banner was given to `Ali and the Prophet set out with an army of three thousand fighters and thirty-six horses.

On the way, the `Asr prayer was due. Some of them said, "We will not pray until we have reached Banu Quraizah, while others said, "No, we will pray at this spot, for the Prophet did not mean that for us." Later on, it was reported that the Prophet, when informed of what had happened, did not berate any of them.

The Prophet besieged them for twenty-five nights until they submitted to his judgment. The Prophet agreed to have Sa`d Ibn Mu'aadh, leader of the Aws tribe, to pass a judgment on them. Sa`d judged that their men (warriors) should be killed, their property divided, and their women and offspring taken as captives. On passing his judgment, the Prophet told him, "You have judged according to Allah's judgment."

The Treaty of Hudaibiyah:

It was about the sixth year of the Hijrah when the Prophet had a dream that he safely entered the Sacred Mosque with his followers and was performing the rituals of Hajj. Their heads were shaved and their hair cut short. As soon as the Prophet told his Companions of his dream, their hearts leaped up with joy since they had a longing desire to perform the Hajj and its hallowed rites after an exile of full six years. The Prophet asked his Companions to prepare for *`Umrah* (the lesser pilgrimage). So they marched forward carrying no weapons save sheathed swords, as they had no intention of fighting.

When Quraish heard of the departure of the pilgrims from Madeenah, they decided to prevent them from entering Makkah, and immediately set out preparing for war. A large army was mustered and the roads to Makkah were completely blocked. When the Prophet heard of the determination of Quraish, he said: "Alas, Quraish! War has devoured them. What harm would they suffer if they let me and the rest of the Arabs go our own way? If they should kill me, that is what they desire, and if Allah should grant me victory over them, they would embrace Islam in flocks. If they do not do (i.e. embrace Islam), they will fight while they have the strength, so what are Quraish thinking of? By Allah, I will not cease to fight for the

mission with which Allah has entrusted me until He makes me victorious or I perish."

When the Prophet and his Companions reached Al-Hudaibiya, some men of the Khuza`ah tribe came to him and asked him what he was there for. The Prophet said that it was not for war that he came forth. He said, "I have no other design but to perform `Umrah and pay a visit to the Sacred Mosque.

Then Quraish sent `Urwah Ibn Mas`ood to try to persuade Prophet not to enter Makkah, but his attempt was unsuccessful. However, he returned to Quraish very impressed by the unfathomable love and profound respect that the Companions showed him. He expressed his impression as such: "O people, I have been sent as an envoy to kings – to Caesar and Chosroes and Negus –but never have I seen a king whose men so honor as the Companions of Muhammad do him. If he commands anything, they almost outstrip his word in fulfilling it; when he performs his ablution (*Wudu'*), they nearly fight for the water thereof; when he speaks, their voices are hushed in his presence; nor will they look him in the face, but lower their eyes in reverence to him."

Then the Prophet sent `Uthmaan Ibn `Affaan, may Allah be pleased with him, to tell Quraish that they had not come but to do worship and that they had no intention of fighting. Quraish, however, were adamant and refused to give him permission to visit the Ka`bah. They offered him permission to perform Hajj in his individual capacity, if he so desired, but `Uthmaan said that he could not do so until the Prophet did. Yet, Quraish kept him as a prisoner.

Muslims were anxiously waiting for `Uthmaan to come back, but his arrival was considerably delayed. Muslims were

later informed that he had been killed. So, the Prophet told his Companions that they would not return to Madeenah until they fought the enemy. Muslims took a solemn pledge (Bai`ah) that they would sacrifice their lives to avenge the death of their Companion and would stand firm in defense of the Prophet. The Pledge has been called *Bai`at Ar-Ridwan* (the Pledge of Satisfaction). But soon came the news that `Uthmaan had not been killed.

When Quraish saw the firm determination of Muslims to shed the last drop of blood for the defense of their faith, they came to their senses and agreed to conclude a treaty of peace with Muslims. According to the truce, the Muslims would go back to Madeenah that year, so that none of the Arabs would say that the Prophet made a forcible entry into Makkah. The Prophet agreed to the terms of the treaty.

The Battle of Khaibar:

Many of the Jews of Banu An- Nadeer and Banu Qainuqaa` who had been expelled from Madeenah joined the Jews of Khaibar, a place situated about one hundred miles north of Madeenah. From there, they conducted their anti-Islamic activities inciting tribes and concocting plots to assassinate the Prophet. They made lavish use of their wealth to induce the neighboring tribes to take up arms against Muslims. They, moreover, thought that the Prophet would not fight them, as they were proud of the strength of their army of ten thousand warriors.

To forestall their hostility, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, marched with a force of 1,400 men in Muharram, 7AH to Khaibar. When the Muslim army reached Khaibar and its forts became visible to them, the Prophet, peace

and blessings be upon him, told his Companions to stop. Then he prayed: "O Allah, Lord of the heavens and what they overshadow, Lord of the lands and what they cause to grow, Lord of the devils and what evil they throw, Lord of the winds and what they winnow! We ask of You the good of this town and the good of its people and the good of what is in it, and we seek refuge in You from its evil and the evil of its people and the evil that is in it." Then he ordered his men to march forward in the name of Allah.

It was evening when the Muslim army were on the outskirts of Khaibar. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, decided to wait until the morning. Should he hear a call to prayer (*Adhan*), he would hold back; otherwise he would attack. When the next day dawned, the Prophet heard no call to prayer. Thereupon he launched an attack on the fortresses of Khaibar. At sunrise, as land workers come out with their spades and baskets, they saw the Muslim army. They were put to flight crying, "Muhammad and his force!" Then the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Allah is Ever Great! Khaibar is ruined."

The Muslim army managed to reduce the minor strongholds one after the other. With that task accomplished, they marched against Al-Khums, the main fortress of Khaibar. All accesses to the fortress were strongly fortified, and within the rampart was a well-equipped garrison. The Jews showed great courage and repulsed every attack on that fortress. Then the standard was given to `Ali Ibn Abi Taalib who was repulsed by the volleys of arrows which rained from the behind the parapets. It was indeed a tough fight. Muslims, however, were not dismayed. They dragged on the siege for twenty days and after constant struggle managed to take hold of the forts. Rich booty fell into the hands of the Muslims as the battle pulled down its curtain.

The Battle of Mu'tah:

In the year 6 AH, upon his return to Madeenah after securing the truce of Hudaibiyah, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, sent messages to both Arab and non-Arab monarchs inviting them to Islam. The letters went to Heraclius, emperor of Byzantium, Chosroes II, emperor of Persia, Negus, king of Abyssinia, Muqawqis, ruler of Egypt and to some Arab princes who ruled over small cities bordering the two great empires. Among these letters was one sent to the king of Busra, to whom the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, sent Al-Harith Ibn `Umair Al-Azdi to invite him to Islam. Unfortunately, the king was so arrogant that he considered the invitation to Islam an insult and responded by killing the Prophet's envoy.

The murder of the envoy was against all laws of inter-tribal morality. The Prophet was very much upset and shocked when the news of the death of his envoy reached him. So he ordered Muslims to prepare for war, and an army of about three thousand men was quickly mustered.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, nominated Zaid Ibn Harithah to command the army and ordered that if Zaid were killed, Ja`far Ibn Abi Taalib would take the command, and if the latter were murdered, `Abdullaah Ibn Rawahah would replace him. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, then ordered the Muslim army: "I advise you to fear Allah and be conscious of Him. Fight those who disbelieve in Allah, in the name of Allah and for His sake. Never should you breach a covenant, entertain treachery, nor steal from the spoils. Under no circumstances should you kill a new-born, a woman, an aging person, nor a hermit. Neither trees should be cut down nor homes demolished.

Then `Abdullaah Ibn Rawaahah encouraged warriors saying: "Men, by Allah, what you dislike is that which you have come out in search of; martyrdom. We are not fighting the enemy with masses, or strength or multitudes, but with this religion with which Allah has honored us. We have before us the certainty of either of two good things, victory or martyrdom."

War broke out. Zaid, may Allah be pleased with him, assumed leadership and began to fight in matchless spirit of bravery until he was killed. Ja`far, may Allah be pleased with him, then took the standard and tenaciously fought the enemy. In the thick of the battle, he dismounted, hamstrung his horse and resumed fighting until his right hand was cut off. He seized the banner with his left and that too was lost. He then clasped the banner with his bleeding arms until a Byzantine soldier struck him and cut him into two parts. Ibn `Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, said that on the day of Mu'tah he stood beside Ja`far as he lied dead, and counted fifty wounds in his body, caused by stabs or strokes, none of which was in his back. Then Khaalid Ibn Al-Waleed, may Allah be pleased with him, assumed command, and Muslims rallied around him, and the advance of the enemy was checked, allowing an orderly retreat for the Muslim army. It was to Khaalid's credit that he made that safe withdrawal. Then Khaalid and the army returned to Madeenah.

The Conquest of Makkah:

According to the terms of the treaty of Hudaibiyah, Arab tribes were given the option to join either of the parties with which they desired to enter into treaty alliance. As a consequence, Banu Bakr joined the Prophet and Khuza`ah joined Quraish. Banu Bakr, caring not a bit for the terms of the

treaty, attacked Banu Khuza`ah. Quraish supplied them with men and arms. One of the Khuza`ah tribe came to ask for the Prophet's aid and the Prophet promised help, saying: "May I not be helped if I don't help the sons of Ka`b (a clan of the Khuza`ah tribe).

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, ordered preparation to be made for a foray. The expedition was first kept a secret but later on the Prophet revealed that it was to the city of Makkah that he wanted to lead his troop.

Under such circumstances, Hatib Ibn Abi Balta`ah, one of the trusted followers of the Prophet, sent a letter to Quraish warning them of the intended surprise attack. He had given this letter to a woman who hid it in her hair. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, then received news from Heaven of Hatib's action, and sent `Ali and Az-Zubair after her and they forced her to hand them the letter. The Prophet summoned Hatib and asked him what had induced him to do that, to which Hatib replied: "Messenger of Allah, I still believe in Allah and his Messenger. But, I am a man who has no affinity of blood with Quraish; my family is at Makkah and there is no one to look after it or to offer protection to it." Here `Umar was about to cut off his head as a hypocrite, but the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, accepted Haatib's excuse and addressed `Umar thus: "He (Haatib) is one of those who fought in the battle of Badr. How do you know that he is a hypocrite, perhaps Allah has looked favorably upon the people of Badr and said: "Do what you wish, for I have forgiven you."

After making full preparations, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, proceeded to Makkah at the helm of ten thousand soldiers on the 16th of Ramadan, 8 AH. Muslims set for Makkah while fasting until they reached a place called Al-

Qudaid, where they broke their fast. Then they resumed their movement until they encamped at a place know as Marr-Az-Zahran.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, did not like to take Quraish by surprise. Therefore, he ordered his men to kindle a fire on all sides for cooking purposes. The Prophet wanted to avoid bloodshed as far as possible and was anxious that the voice of reason would find its way through to the minds of the haughty Makkans hoping they would weigh the pros and cons of the matter before coming forward for an encounter.

In the meantime, Abu Sufyaan, Hakeem Ibn Hizaam and Budail Ibn Warqah went out to gather information about the Prophet, whereupon some of the Prophet's guards saw them. He caught them and brought them to the Prophet. Abu Sufyaan embraced Islam.

Then the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, entered Makkah while on his mount and bowing his head until his beard almost touched the saddle, in gratitude to Allah. He entered his tent near the Sacred Mosque and offered eight *Rak`ahs* in thanksgiving. Then he entered the Sacred Mosque and performed *`Umrah* by making the seven rounds of the House. Then he headed for the idols which surrounded the Ka`bah, pointing at them with his staff, reciting the verse: ***"And say: truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is(by its nature) bound to perish."***(Al Israa': 83)

As he pointed at the 360 idols, one by one, each idol fell one after the other. Then he went to pray at the Station of Ibrahim; then to the well of Zamzam where his uncle `Abbaas offered him water to drink. Then he ordered that paintings inside the Ka`bah should be effaced. Next he went out and

addressed the gathering in these words: "Praise be to Allah, Who has fulfilled His promise and helped His Servant and routed the confederates, He alone. " Then he asked the people: "O people of Quraish! What do you think of the treatment I am about to accord to you?" They replied: "We say well, and think well: an honorable brother, and the son of an honorable brother." To this the Prophet answered: " I speak to you in the same words as Joseph spoke to his brothers: *"He said: '**This day let not reproach be (cast) on you: Allah will forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!*** (Yoosuf: 92) *Go your way, for you are free."*

The Battle of Hunain:

Two tribes, Hawazin and Thaqif, about fifty miles to the south of Makkah, when receiving the news of the conquest of Makkah, made an agreement to fight the Prophet and attack him during his stay in Makkah before he could spread his religion throughout Arabia. Malik Ibn `Awf, the chief of Hawaazin, put forward a plan. He ordered his men to bring their families and belongings to the field, believing that their presence would best spur them on and they would fight to death in their defense. So they mustered an army of twenty thousand soldiers.

When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, heard what the enemy tribes were planing, he ordered his men to make their preparations for war. The Prophet marched out with twelve thousand soldiers. It was one of the biggest armies that had hither to be assembled under the Prophet. So, some of the Muslims felt greatly elated with their numbers and with their preparations of war. One of them, out of excitement, said, "We shall not be worsted this day by smallness of numbers." When the Muslim army approached the valley of Hunain, they descended down the valley in the morning twilight. The enemy

had reached it before them and hidden in its bypaths and narrow places in which they entrenched fully equipped and fully prepared. Then suddenly the enemy sprang from his ambuscade and charged furiously upon them. Staggered by the unexpected onslaught, one column after the other fell back and shocked the narrow pass. Panic then seized the Muslim army. Many of them turned and fled. It appeared that a general rout had taken place.

Amidst such adverse circumstances that befell Muslims with the exception of the Prophet's devoted friends and admirers, there was general chaos. The Prophet called out at the top of his voice: "I am the Messenger of Allah undoubtedly; I am the son of `Abdul Muttalib." `Abbaas was also asked by the Prophet to call on the fleeing men; and he shouted at the top of his voice: "O Companions of the tree! O Companions of acacia!" They replied, "Here we are." That was a turning-point in the battle; the fleeing soldiers tarried, formed their ranks and flung themselves at the enemy. The leader of Hawazin fought bravely, but was forced to flee with his men; and the women and children were taken captives. They were later returned to Hawazin.

Then the Muslim army marched to At-Taa'if, where the tribe of Thaqif lived, and they besieged it for about three weeks. It was a fortified city and the inhabitants refused to surrender. The besiegers were received with showers of arrows so thick that they darkened the sky like the flight of locusts.

When the Prophet asked for Abu Bakr's opinion, it was given in these words, "I do not think you will gain from them this day what you desire." Thus the Prophet ordered that the siege be lifted. Some Muslims asked the Prophet to invoke Allah's curse and Wrath on the city. Yet, instead cursing them, he raised his hands in prayer and said, "O Allah, guide Thaqif,

and direct them on to me." The prayer was answered and before long people of Thaqif embraced Islam willingly.

The March to Tabook:

Soon after his return to Madeenah, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, learned that the Byzantines had mobilized an army to invade the Muslim state in Madeenah. The Prophet told his followers to make the necessary preparations in order to meet the impending menace. They were hand-tied by a number of unfavorable conditions; the journey was long, the weather burning hot and there was a drought.

Those whose faith was frail were loath to quit the ease and shelter of their homes and pleaded inability on frivolous excuses. One of them said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, grant me permission to stay behind and do not tempt me, for every one knows that I am strongly addicted to women and I am afraid that if I see Roman women I shall not be able to control myself." The Prophet granted him permission and turned away from him.

However, the majority of Muslims responded to the call with usual readiness and zeal. Hardships could not demoralize them. They were very enthusiastic about fighting for Allah's cause. When the appeal was made for funds, voluntary contributions poured in from every quarter, as the leading Companions vied with one another to make generous donations. `Uthmaan, may Allah be pleased with him, contributed with three hundred camels and ten thousands dinars. `Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, presented half of his total belongings. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, offered all that he had. Upon this, the Prophet asked him, "O Abu Bakr! Have you left anything for your family?" "Allah and His

Messenger," replied Abu Bakr. `Abdur-Rahmaan Ibn `Awf, may Allah be pleased with him, brought hundred ounces of silver.

But even such generous contributions did not suffice to meet the expenses of the expedition in hand. Some poor Muslims, who longed to take part in the expedition, could not make provision for it. So they came to the Prophet to be provided with mounts, but he said to them, "I can find no mounts for you." So they turned and went home with their eyes streaming with tears as they could not find aught to expend.

Then the army of three thousand Muslims moved towards the north until it reached Tabuk. They stayed there for about twenty days, but there was no fighting. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, concluded treaties of peace with some of the rulers in the area, and returned to Madeenah.

The Farewell Pilgrimage:

In the tenth year of the Hijrah, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, went to Makkah to perform the Hajj in the company of 30,000 Muslims on the 25th of DhulQa`dah. It took them ten days to reach Makkah. When he entered Makkah and saw the Sacred House, the Prophet prayed: "O Allah, increase this House in honor, magnificence, bounty, reverence, and piety." He entered the Mosque and made the seven rounds of the Ka`bah, after which he prayed at the Station of Ibrahim. Then, going out to As-Safa, he shuttled between it and Al-Marwah seven times, and those who were with him did the same.

On the 8th day of the month of Dhul Hijjah, he rode to the valley of Mina and spent the night there. After daybreak, he rode to `Arafat and it was at the base of the mount of *Rahmah*

(mercy) that the Prophet stayed there the whole day. Then the Prophet addressed the pilgrims, saying: "O people, listen to my words. I do not know whether I shall ever meet you in this place after this year. O people, surely your blood, your property and your honor are inviolable until you meet your Lord, even as this day and this month are inviolable for all. Surely you will meet your Lord, and He will for sure ask you about your deeds. O people, have I faithfully conveyed the message? O Allah, be my witness.

He who has any trust with him let him return it to him who entrusted him with it. Verily, all usury is abolished, and you only have a right to your capital, without your inflicting injustice on others, nor others inflicting injustice on you. Allah has decreed that there should be no usury. And the usury of Al-`Abbaas Ibn `Abdul Muttalib is abolished, all of it. Surely all bloodshed in the pre-Islamic period is to be left unavenged. The first claim on blood I abolished is that of Rabi`ah Ibn Al-Harith, who was nursed among Banu Laith and whom Hudhail killed. It is the first bloodshed in the pre-Islamic period which I deal with.

O people, Satan has despaired of ever being worshiped in your land, but if he can be obeyed in anything short of worship, he will be pleased with matters you may despair and think of little account, so beware of him in your religion.

O people, postponement of sacred months is only an excess of disbelief whereby those who disbelieve are led into error; they hold it lawful (to fight in) one year and unlawful another to make up the number of months made unlawful by Allah. Surely time has completed its cycle and it is now as it was on the day Allah created heaven and earth. The number of months with Allah is twelve; four of them are sacred, three

consecutive and Rajab, which is between Jumadah and Sha`ban.

O people, you have rights over your wives and they have rights over you. You have the right that they should not defile your beds, and that they should commit evident obscenity. If they do, Allah permits you to admonish them, refuse to share their beds, and beat them lightly. If they refrain from these sins, they have a right to their provision and clothing with kindness. Lay injunctions on women kindly, for they are the helpless without you, unable to provide for themselves. Surely you have taken them only as a trust from Allah and their private parts have been made lawful to you by the word of Allah.

O people, be mindful of what I say. I have left amongst you that which, if you hold fast to, shall preserve you from error, an evident indication; the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet.

O people, listen and give heed to what I say. Remember that every Muslim is a Muslim's brother, and that Muslims are brothers. It is not lawful for anybody to take from his brother except what he gives him willingly; so do not wrong yourselves. O Allah, have I faithfully conveyed the message?" Then these verses were revealed: ***"This day those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion. Yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion."*** (Al Ma'idah: 3)

The Prophet Departs to His Heavenly Abode:

By that time, the Prophet's mission was completed. The time came for him to depart to his heavenly abode. He began

to suffer from illness and his health deteriorated at an alarming speed.

Al Bukhari narrates that on the early days of Saffar, 11 AH, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, went to the graves of the martyrs of Uhud and offered prayer for them. Then he stood on the pulpit and addressed his followers: "I am to precede you and I am your witness. Your tryst with me is at the Fount[9], which verily I behold from here where now I stand. I have been given the keys of worldly treasures. By Allah, I do not fear for you that you will associate partners with Allah after me, but I do fear for you from this world, lest you should strike one another's necks for the acquisition of worldly gains."

It is also narrated that he, peace and blessings be upon him, went to Al Baqi` cemetery and prayed for forgiveness for the martyrs, saying, "Peace be on you, people of the graves! Happy are you that you are so much better than men now alive. Dissension have come like waves of darkest night one after the other, each worse than the previous one."

On Monday 29th of Saffar, 11 H., the Prophet went to Al Baqi` and prayed for the dead. Then he returned to his wife Maimunah's house. The fever grew violent and the pain considerably increased. But, withstanding all this suffering with remarkable calmness and serenity, he led prayer in the mosque. He then fell too week and his illness worsened. He set to his wives: "Pour over me seven skins of water from different wells so that I may go out to the men and exhort them." They had him sit down in a tub belonging to Hafsa and poured water over him until he cried, "Enough, enough!" Then

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[9] This is the Fount (of abundance) which Allah mentions in *Surah Al Kawthar.* On Judgment Day, righteous Muslims will be allowed to drink from this Fount, after which they will not grow thirsty ever again.

they helped him get dressed and bound up his head and `Ali and `Abbaas supported him to go to the mosque, where he sat on the pulpit and addressed the people, saying: "There is a slave whom Allah offered the choice between this world and that which is with Him, and the slave has chosen that which is with Allah." It was only Abu Bakr who perceived what the Prophet meant, and so he burst into to tears, as he knew that the Prophet was speaking of himself and that the choice meant imminent death. The Prophet realised that his friend had understood, and asking him not to weep, he said: "The most bountiful of men to me in his companionship and his sacrifice of his wealth is Abu Bakr. If I where to choose a bosom friend, I would choose Abu Bakr -- but companionship and brotherhood in faith remain until Allah unites us in His presence."

When the Prophet grew seriously ill, `A'ishah narrated, he ordered the people to tell Abu Bakr to lead them in prayer. But `A'ishah feared that it would greatly pain her father to take the place of the Prophet. So she said, "Messenger of Allah, Abu Bakr is a very sensitive man, not strong of voice and much given to weeping when he recites the Qur'an." To this, the Prophet answered, "You are even like the women that were with Joseph. Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer."

The Prophet lay much of the time with his head resting on `Aa'ishah's breasts or on her lap. His daughter Fatimah replied: "The first time, the Prophet told me that he would not recover from his illness and therefore I wept. The second time he told me that I would be the first of his family to follow him, and that made me laugh."

The malady of the Prophet assumed a serious turn. Fever rose to such a pitch that the hands could hardly be placed upon

the Prophet's body because of the burning heat. His body was racking with pain; but he was too busy calling on people to righteousness. Turning to his wives who sat close by, he said: "O Fatimah, my daughter and you, Saffeyah, my aunt! Strive to do that which shall please Allah, for I verily have no power with Him to save you in any way."

On the 11th of Rabee` Al-Awwal, fever and pain had somewhat abated and there was some recovery of strength. The Prophet, hearing the call to prayer, decided to go to the mosque. The prayer had already begun when he entered, and Muslims were almost drawn away with the joy of seeing the Prophet, but he motioned them to continue. Abu Bakr had been conscious of the stir behind him, and he realized that the Prophet himself must have stepped into the mosque. So without turning his head, Abu Bakr stepped back, but the Prophet placed his hand on his shoulder and pushed him gently forward as a sign that he should continue leading Muslims in prayer. When he finished, the Prophet sat on the pulpit and addressed his devoted followers as such: "By Allah, I have not made anything lawful except that which Allah has declared lawful; nor have I declared anything unlawful except that which Allah has deemed forbidden."

The Prophet seemed quite exhausted, so he went back to `A'ishah 's house accompanied by two of his Companions. As the day advanced, his health failed rapidly. `A'ishah, seeing he was too frail, raised his head from the pillow and placed it on her lap. She kept moisturizing his forehead with damp cloth. The fever was very high. But the noble Prophet remained calm and never complained. He had resigned to the will of Allah and repeated the following words over and over again: "In the company of those on whom is the grace of Allah."

He felt as if he was drifting towards the inevitable end. Though going through the throes of death, he did not for a moment lose courage. He kept on supplicating Allah to help him: "O Lord! I beseech You seeking Your help through the agony of death."

At this point, `Aa'ishah's brother, `Abdur-Rahman, entered the room with a green *Siwaak* (a tooth stick) in his hand. Seeing that his eyes rested on it, `A'ishah knew that he wanted it. So she took it from her brother and chewed it a little to make it soft and pliable. Then she gave it to the Prophet, who brushed his teeth with it vigorously despite his sickness.

His strength now rapidly sank and he was heard saying: "Lord, grant me pardon and join me with companionship on high." He also a murmured, "Nay, the most Exalted Companion in Paradise." Then he said, "Prayer! The persons who have been entrusted to your care!" This he repeated several times. Then he began to lose consciousness and his strength ebbed back. His eyes opened widely and he said clearly: "Lord! Blessed is the companionship on high." His limbs gradually relaxed. He fell back in `A'ishah's lap. She fixed her eyes upon him anxiously, almost hoping to get a response from him but she found, to her great sorrow, that the faint suggestion of a smile which relaxed her husband's lips did not belong to this world. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, by then had returned to the companionship of the One on high. That was on Monday 12th, Rabee` Al-Awwal, in the 11th year of the *Hijrah*.

When the news of the Prophet's death spread to all corners of the city, consternation blazed through the ranks of the people. Some wept bitterly, some were struck dumb, some disbelieved the news of his death and held that it was only a swoon. `Umar Ibn Al Khattaab stood up and said, "Some

hypocrites think that the Prophet has died; but the Prophet is not dead. However, he has gone to his Lord as Moses, son of `Imraan, had gone to his Lord, and he had been absent from his people forty nights, and he (Moses) returned to them after it was said that he had died. By Allah, the Prophet will return as Moses had returned, and he will surely cut off the hands and feet of men who allege that he is dead."

Just then Abu Bakr appeared passing through the mosque and disregarding the crowds that pressed about him, he walked onwards into the house of `A'ishah where the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was lying. He uncovered his face and kissed him saying, "You are dearer to me than my father and mother. You have tasted death which Allah has decreed; a second death will never overtake you." He then went out while `Umar was still talking to the people, and he said, "Gently, `Umar, calm down." But `Umar did not listen to him. So Abu Bakr moved towards the people who had thronged round him and addressed them saying: "O people, let whoever worships Muhammad know that Muhammad is surely dead, and let whoever worships Allah know that Allah is alive and shall never die." He then recited the verse: ***" Muhammad is no more than a Messenger: many were the Messengers that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will ye then turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah; but Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve Him) with gratitude."*** (Ali `Imraan: 144)

This short sermon brought solace to the wounded hearts of Muslims and they submitted with cheerful resignation to the will of Allah! `Umar said, "By Allah, when I heard Abu Bakr recite that verse, it was as if I had never heard it before, and I was dumbfounded so that my legs could not carry me and I felt to the ground knowing that the Prophet was indeed dead."

`Ali and `Abbaas undertook the task of washing the Prophet's body with his garment on him. As `Ali passed his hand over his garment, he said: "Dearer to me than my father and mother, how immaculate are you alive and dead!"

The Companions disagreed as to where to bury the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. Abu Bakr ended the problem when he recalled that the Prophet had said: "No Prophet dies but is buried where he passes away." Thus, the grave was dug in the floor of `A'ishah's room near the bed where the Prophet was lying.

People began to come in groups to offer funeral prayer for the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him; first, his family, then the *Muhajirun*, then the *Ansar*. Men prayed first, followed by women, then children. No man led people in prayer, and the burial took place Wednesday in the middle of the night. Amidst genuine feelings of profound grief and sorrow, the words of Umm Ayman most adequately expressed the reasons behind those feelings. "Not for him do I weep, "she said, "do I not know that he has gone to that which is better for him than this world? But I weep for the revelation from heaven which has been cut off from us."

Allah's peace and blessings be upon you, O beloved Prophet, the best of Allah's creatures.

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